

No. 20

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Contents

DAGON No.20

November-January 1987

Front cover illustration by
Dave Carson.

Editorial.....	p.4
CRAWLING AT YOU.....	p.5
THE SHADE OF ALHAZRED Illustration by Dave Carson.....	p.6
THE APOTHECARIUM OF YABOOL-SYN by Gary Lovisi.....	p.7
YOU IN YOUR SMALL CORNER by Andy Bennison.....	p.18
FANTASYCON XII - MY APPOINTMENT WITH FEAR by Carl T. Ford.....	p.22
THE ACOLYTE by Sandy Petersen.....	p.24
THE RED BRAIN'S TRUST by Peter F. Jeffery.....	p.26
THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE by N. Mark Gordon.....	p.29
THE STORIES OF MURKALES by D. F. Lewis.....	p.35
THE JOURNAL OF J. P. DRAPEAU by Thomas Ligotti.....	p.41
R'LYEH REVIEWS	p.45
CTHULHU Illustration by Sylvia Starshine.....	p.51
BLACK MAIL.....	p.52

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Winners of the FROM BEYOND
competition last issue were:
Oliver Cameron-Swan, Mike
Mason, Richard Watts and Des
Murphy. All receive a From
Beyond Tee-shirt.

Editorial

If you were a fan of the macabre and living some fifty years ago, the magazine you would have looked forward to reading every month would have undoubtedly been *Weird Tales*. Travelling back to the Winter months of 1937 and early '38 the magazine carried such familiar names as Lovecraft, Robert Bloch, Robert E. Howard, Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore and Manly Wade Wellman. In addition to the big names *Weird Tales*, under the editorship of Farnsworth Wright, printed some excellent tales by fresh and original writers. Gladys Gordon Trenery (under the pseudonym of G. G. Pendarves) wrote an excellent ghost story entitled "Thing of Darkness" along with several other eerie pieces. Another female writer, Mary Elizabeth Counselman contributed a fine piece to the December '37 issue entitled "The Black Stone Statue" which told of a mysterious, stone Medusa like sculpture. Some excellent poetry by Edgar Daniel Kramer including the ghoulish "Grave-Stones" (November '37) and fine artwork covers by Margaret Brundage and interior art by Virgil Finlay proved that, despite the magazine's constant financial troubles, *Weird Tales* was the outstanding magazine of fantasy literature in its day.

Fifty years onwards, we have a host of new and interesting magazines devoted to publishing weird fiction. The excellent *Fantasy Tales* recently published its tenth anniversary issue featuring the talents of such big names as Brian Lumley, Clive Barker, Michael Moorcock, Ramsey Campbell and William F. Nolan. Many other brilliant magazines also feature a number of original tales by leading authors of the macabre. *Fantasy and Science Fiction* magazine, *Fantasy Book*, *Twilight Zone* and *Weirdbook* are, perhaps, the four other major titles currently publishing weird fiction.

This edition of *Dagon* is also devoted to the publication of fantastic fiction, but, unlike most of the other titles, we haven't got any "big names" this time round. Like *Weird Tales*, this issue shows that we can still find some excellent stories from the smaller names. All the fiction in this issue comes courtesy of amateur writers, but don't let that put you off.

Des Lewis supplies us with the first five "Tales of Murkales" a series of twelve weird shorts, which demonstrate the writer's original style of combining humour and the fantastic. Gary Lovisi has had fiction published by Bob Price's Cryptic Publications in the U.S., but as far as I am aware, this is the first time the author's work has appeared outside his homeland. N. Mark Gordon is another name unfamiliar to mainstream publishing. His comic strip presentation "The Crossword Puzzle" shows his remarkable talents as an illustrator, the fact that the artist also wrote the tale says a lot for his abilities as an all round conveyor of the macabre. Perhaps the biggest name this issue is that of Thomas Ligotti, but despite the writer's cult following in England and the U.S. I suspect that his work is still unfamiliar to most readers. His essay here is a personal piece, a rather unsettling account, which like all Tom's stories conjures up a sense of magical terror and mystery.

So settle down and enjoy some weird tales of our own. — C. T. Ford

Crawling at you

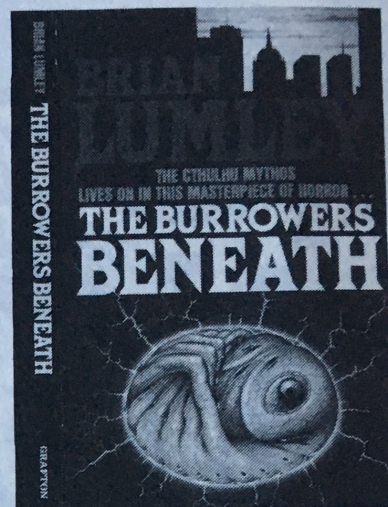
THE BURROWERS ARE HERE!

Brian Lumley's first novel, *The Burrowers Beneath* receives its long awaited British publication from Grafton in February. The novel featuring Titus Crow and the Spawn of Shudde-M'ell has been out of print for a few years now, so it should do well with Mythos freaks. Plans are also underway for W. Paul Ganley's Weirdbook Press to release the novel in both hardback and special slipcase editions in the U.S. no doubt copies will burrow over here eventually.

Ganley also has Lumley's new one, *Mad Moon of Dreams*, with the Dave Carson illustrations, due to roll off the presses any time now.

Meanwhile *Necroscope II* has been typeset & proof-read by the author for an as yet unannounced release date in the New Year.

Lumley's new Mythos novelette, *Synchronicity, or Something* will be released in a special, signed limited edition from Dagon Press around about April. Dave Carson provides the artwork for this one too!

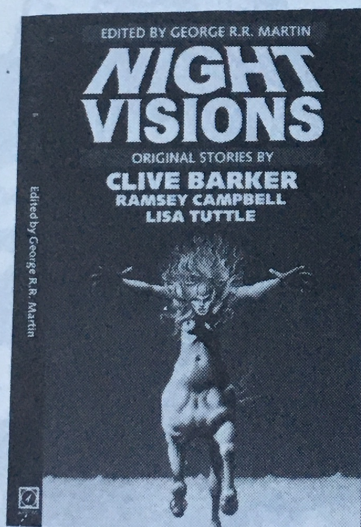


CAMPBELL & COMPANY

Night Visions — the collection of tales by Ramsey Campbell, Lisa Tuttle and Clive Barker receives a paperback release from Arrow this month.

Scream/Press have Campbell's new novel *The Influence* out early in the new year, complete with J.K. Potter illustrations. The book will be available in both hardback and signed, slipcased editions and a special leather-bound collectors piece will be available for the rich kids.

Reports say that sales of Campbell's *Dark Feasts* collection are doing nicely. The same company have recently re-released three classics of the horror genre, Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* & *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* and Richard Matheson's excellent *I Am Legend* in paperback format.



LOVECRAFT ON FILM

Stuart Gordon fans will no doubt be pleased to learn that *From Beyond* has just fronted from Vestron Video (see last issue for review). Staying with the subject of Lovecraft movies, 'The H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society', situated in Colorado, U.S.A. have just completed filming of a small budget adaptation of "The Statement of Randolph Carter". This one-hour long film was shot on location in Colorado last summer by Andrew Leman. The film undergoes a small release in the US at the time of

(Continued on page 15)



The Apothecarium of Yabool-Syn

by Gary Lovisi

I.

AT THE MAGE'S DIRECTIVE

In the final days of Earth's last city, there lived a mage named Yabool-Syn, who was an apothecariust of rare acumen and distinction, one astute in the culture of herbs and chemical contrivances, and whose vast knowledge of arcane enchantments and poultices was the talk of mystical Shen-umbra.

Within his secluded manse, located in a section of the multi-tiered megalopolis known as the eye of the Hellspoint, Yabool-Syn worked daily upon all manner of necromantic and magical directives.

His latest endeavor was a recreation of the wonderous Elixir of Life, a potion which would extend the gift of Foreverness to any brave enough to drink of this mysterious combination. However, to accomplish this vast feat the master magician required one more ingredient to make a powerful composite of this arcane mixture, and obtaining that rare and missing item was turning the long hairs atop Yabool-Syn's head chalk grey at an alarming rate. For the mage needed a petal from the rare Rose of Exumanities, such a flower which does not even exist on this plane of Earthly delights, but is native to more demon haunted climes lost somewhere in the nether dimensions between time, in a sub-strata of existence known as Topaz.

"I must have that last ingredient!" Yabool-Syn spoke aloud in his workshop lined with shelves full to the bursting point with time-withered and hoary tomes containing the world's darkest secrets, and tables upon which all manner of strange devices, plants and animals resided. "And if it will not come to me then I shall construct a golem of my own special manufacture and send it to travel the time lines to secure for me a sample of this most wondrous of floras".

So the master mage had decided upon a course of action and now he needed to create a likely surrogate of some manner to travel the planes of existence and seek out his prize — for he was not fool enough to go on such a mad and dangerous errand for himself and thereby place his valuable persona in any number of terrible and unimagined dangers. So Yabool-Syn thought hard upon what kind of creature was best suited for success in such an extreme and uncharted venture. Perhaps a human golem of the warrior variety? Perhaps some horrible beastly servant? Maybe a giant insectoid, or some empheral sprite from one of the nether realms? Well he'd tried all these and many others before — all without success. This time he decided upon something different — and that was when his eyes fell on the tiny mouse which lay sleeping in yonder cage so peacefully oblivious to all the mighty troubles of the world.

And no sooner did the idea strike him than Yabool-Syn prepared a magnif-

icent potion of Preambulative Sentience and force-fed the tiny and unwary rodent a dozen daring drops of the murky liquid. Well the change in the tiny mouse was immediate and catastrophic, for Yabool-Syn now knew that the creature's intelligence factor had been raised to such a level as to enable it to speak mind-to-mind, as many of the high lords of Shenumbra were able to converse amongst themselves and between such of the lesser beasts temporally raised to this exhalted and lofty place of demi-godhood.

"My Lord, what have you done to me?" The mouse spoke with a chattering fear, words that went straight into the venerable mind of Yabool-Syn.

"I have need of your talents, little mouse, upon an errand of the utmost importance and complexity. Will you do as I instruct you? Your reward will be a hearty compensation".

Well the mouse began to dwell on this for a short time, he carefully sniffed at the table he now found himself standing upon and at the air all around him. He curled his gorgeous tail and took a long last look back at what had been a rather grand cage, and then said with proper resignation, "I am but a small mouse and you are a great master here. I can do nothing but obey and trust you to keep your promise to me after I have accomplished your desired deed".

"Very good. Spoken like a mouse among mice!" Yabool-Syn gloated with happy enthusiasm. Then he carefully picked up the tiny rodent and carried him to a cluttered work table where he placed him down saying, "There is a place that I must now send you to. It is an alien sphere, both dark and dangerous, but since you are a small and wary creature, you shall have little trouble and should survive all obstacles thrown your way. You will be going to a land called Topaz and you will be searching for a petal of the rare and wondrous Rose of Exumanities. When you find this rose call out to me. I will hear your voice echo through the spheres of time and bring you back safely to this reality. It is really all very simple, do you not think so?"

"Perhaps I am pessimistic of mind but I seem to see that all manner of problems could arise from this mission - not the least of which could be the possibility of considerable harm to my person". The tiny mouse said this all most carefully but with polite insistence.

The mighty mage affected an annoyed look and then a slight shrug. "Oh, nonsense! I've taken care to think of every alternative. That's why I'm sending you in the first place, being a mouse you may be the prefect creature to assure success in this venture. Now shed your pessimism and prepare for your greatest adventure!"

"But what of the dangers?" The mouse asked with insistence, "Could not this rarest of roses be guarded by demonspawn things - huge felines with mousetasting claws?"

"All that I require of you is to snatch a petal of the rose and then call out to me. I will hear you and bring you back safe and sound. Now what could be more simpler than that?" Yabool-Syn asked, and then his eyes bore down on the tiny mouse and his mind added, "I think I need not elaborate to you the unpleasantries which will result if you invoke rescue without possessing a petal of the rose".

"I see," the mouse said thoughtfully. "Well then, we had best proceed with this venture, for the sooner begun, the sooner ended I say".

"Bravo mouse!" Yabool-Syn coached as his optimism now burst forth. "I now know that I was right in choosing you for this important mission. I congratulate you, Mr. Mouse! Now, if you will allow me a moment to prepare things, I shall soon have you off into the other-dimensional world of Topaz".

Well the tiny mouse tried to look excited about his impending journey but his artificially enhanced intelligence just persisted in showing him all manner of mammoth dangers — many with bright mousecutting claws and slavering lips. It is not a pleasant way to embark into the regions of the unknown at all.

Finally, Yabool-Syn clapped his hands in wondrous delight and said, "Prepare yourself, my good mouse, for now all is in readiness".

II.

A MOUSE IN TOPAZ

Topaz is difficult to explain to one unaccustomed to the unique experience. In some manner it is merely a state of mind rather than a specific place, and yet it does have the form and substance of reality, with its own precarious existence being separate and distinct from other better-known and more worldly realities.

"So this is Topaz!" The tiny mouse thought to himself as he stared, wide-eyed at the many colours and shadows cascading before him as if dancing off the edge of the greatest of ancient waterfalls. Twisting and turning reality — where ground was up and sky was down, and the two could change perspective at any moment unbeknown to a very tiny, confused mouse. A place where warmth and cold interchanged spontaneously to create wide divergences in atmosphere and temperature — snow that was burning to the flesh, rain that 'fell' upwards, winds and doldrum existing within the very same microsphere and negative gravity wells caused the small rodent to float and flow, fly and flop about as if being buffeted by an unknown hand.

"The Rose my good mouse! Do not forget The Rose!" A tired voice slowly urged within the rodent's tiny skull, and the miniscule adventurer tried to orient his confused senses to the strangeness swirling about him, so that he might perform this most reluctant of missions and then return to the safety and security of his beloved cage.

The mouse surged forward, being carried upon a morass of violent winds, through colours and imagination, dreams and all manner of illusionary devices, until he came to a great lumbering arbor that floated freely in the atmosphere — its monstrous roots streaming boldly outward — its great branches atop the other end growing in equally wild abandon. The little mouse was fascinated by the existence of a floating tree — and even more surprised when he noticed that which grew so radiantly within a hollow bole of the massive trunk. For a tiny plant was perched there — alone and on the edge in persistent growth — and sprouting from its leafy branches was a single swaying blossom — the rare and sacred Rose of Exumanities.

The bold little mouse steered himself closer as best he could and within a few moments was near enough to view the magnificent bloom. What he saw was the very strangest of all flowers, no greater in size than himself, but of which each delicate petal contained the composite structure and

living essence of each of the multi-worlds that exist throughout all the netherspheres of time and space and the minds of men and mice. here was the key to all destinations within and without the universe — and of all the many thousands upon thousands of petals that grew, blossomed and withered away with the passing moments — there was but one which our tiny mouse must choose for the magical contrivances of Yabool-Syn.

"Choose correctly, Good Mouse!" Were the words that somehow entered his mind from some faraway reality.

Our mouse was quite confused by this time and growing quite upset after viewing what was transpiring within the folds of the blossomed petals. Worlds and ways so unlike anything ever imagined intruded their harsh existence upon his reeling senses, causing a warping and distortion of all the realities of mice and men with which he was familiar.

"And of them all — which petal do I choose?" The mouse thought nervously to himself. For a frantic moment he had thought of making off with the entire Rose itself — but somehow he instinctively knew that this was something not allowed and impossible to accomplish — being far beyond the insignificant powers of one tiny mouse. No, he must choose only one petal and then quickly depart, trusting in the magical skills and promises of Yabool-Syn to bring him safely through the dimensional block and back to his own very much-missed reality.

"Which petal do I choose?" Our noble mouse called out to the nothingness that swirled around him in ever-increasing frequency. But there was no answer that issued forth from that faraway room where Yabool-Syn pondered and paced so impatiently — and our mouse realised that for better or worse the decision was his, and his alone.

Once more he watched in stunned disbelief all the multi-tiered realities that burst forth upon the petals of the Rose — some showing worlds quite rational and understandable, and others so bizarre and senseless that the very viewing of them caused him distress. How does one choose? What should he do? The mouse wondered whether he should choose a pastoral and known reality or perhaps the most wild and bizarre of them all! Or just, perhaps, something in between. Something which looked interesting and yet not overtly dangerous. Perhaps he should just close his tiny eyes and extract a forward claw to grab whichever petal first came into his grasp? And what of Yabool-Syn and his labyrinthine magicks? What would the addition of a rare petal from this powerful Rose do to his shadow-purposed contrivances and poultices? And which petal? Might not one petal cause success and another much more dire consequences? Perhaps, but none of that was within the scope of a tiny mouse that had lately been exulted above all others of his kind by the administration of a potion of Preambulative Sentience — a potion whose wondrous effects were already wearing thin and would soon not even be a memory in that dim rodent brain.

So our mouse made his valiant choice, and his tiny claws clutched up the sacred petal — but as he did so his mind once more plunged into that morass of dark and purposeless expectation which is the one singular reality of mice everywhere — and the reason for this most purposeful of choices was lost to him forever.

* * * *

III.

THE ROSE OF EXUMANITIES

Once more the hairs atop that worried old head turned grey as Yabool-Syn waited with wild impatience and hungry anticipation for his tiny messenger to return from the domains of mysterious Topaz. What seemed to flow by with abandon of many days in this sphere of time and dance actually occurred in mere hours to a very tiny mouse that suddenly reappeared, delicately carrying a gorgeous rose petal between loosened jaws.

"My Rose! My Rose!" Yabool-Syn cried and clapped in delight, as he quickly grabbed the startled creature into his eager hands. With delicate long fingers, he prodded open the confused rodent's jaws and carefully extracted the sacred petal, which did not so much as have a single tooth mark upon its surface to mar its wondrous features and effects.

Yabool-Syn set the mouse down within his cage, saying, "You have been a fine surrogate, my little fellow. Now away with you, while I direct my energies to more important matters".

Then Yabool-Syn gathered himself about the sacred petal and stared deeply into its folds and depths to become momentarily lost with what was occurring therein. But, as he stared, his features iced over with an all-encompassing cold, as if the very flesh and bones of his being were now only a substance of frozen nothingness, lost in a timefield that does not exist, and blown upon the winds that go from Nothing to Nowhere. For the arch-mage of long forgotten Shenumbra now looked into the deep heart of Nothing; absolute, unreal, unfathomable Nothing — that which cannot exist as any part of reality or in any reality at all — and yet it is a Nothing that truly *was*.

"This cannot be!" Yabool-Syn bellowed into the glassy sphere of the petal of Exumanities. "Nothingness, by its very nature cannot exist! Only something with substance, form and purpose can exist — that which is not real CANNOT BE REAL! That which is NOTHING cannot be SOMETHING!"

And then the petal laughed and Yabool-Syn shivered as he heard that terrible voice and watched in rapt anticipation as the sound was borne upon the air by a sudden strong wind and deposited into small ill-smelling chemical mixtures and contrivances which, upon impact with the petal, began to glow and smoke and cry out tearful pleas of warning. And as the various elements continued to mix, in a long lost alchemical process which produced a dangerous conundrum known by some as The Elixir of Life, Yabool-Syn quickly opened the *Scarlet Book Of Mages*, searching desperately for that non-existent page that legend says cannot be read by the eyes of man. Furiously, fingers flowed through the tome as nervous eyes scanned the bubbling, boiling mixture that was sending forth such a smokey stench throughout the building. He must find that page. And finally, the mage stopped when he came to what seemed an apparently blank leaf in the book — unlabelled and unmarked, an unpaginated sheet that had been magically inserted as a part of the *Scarlet Book Of Mages*. This time the leaf was located in the spaces between pages two hundred and two hundred and one — between the Curse of Prognostical Digression and The Diminutive Scorn. The blank sheet of paper suddenly came alive to hosts of thousands of cursive letters that instantly began dancing around the page, into form and substance and message and eventual meaning. And Yabool-Syn, in both fear and fascination, began to read what texts were written so mysteriously therein.

At the top of the page, in a deep and cursive script, stood the title; "The Retraction Principle - Sliding Backwards Fearlessly". Yabool-Syn steeled his nerves and read quickly as the bubbling runaway elixir sparked and fumed into ghastly readiness at the other end of the room.

Yabool-Syn read on, and as he did so he tried to understand, but his fear and confusion took their mark and he was unsure of what course to take regarding his potion and whether the addition of Nothingness to Eternity would have any effect or use to him — or would such a union unleash some dangerous monstrosity that might destroy him forever.

The mage ran to where he had placed his brave, rodent messenger a few moments before.

"I require your services once more, Good Mouse". Yabool-Syn cried as the terror welling within him fought to overwhelm his senses — the terrible fear that he might have lost control of this bizarre creation — that he had, in fact, created something that might be dark and evil and hungry forever. And the mage feared that he might be the first of its sorry victims, unless he experimented with this dubious potion upon the poor surrogate to test its qualities and be assured of safe results should he then decide to avail himself of its promised boon of sacred Foreverness.

"Good Mouse". Yabool-Syn said as he held the tiny creature in his hands and moved towards the horrible brew that sat spewing forth all manner of sparks and angry dark smoke from his worktable. "You shall have the first taste. For your past favour to me — though it is apparent you made the worst of all choices — you shall receive your reward. There is none better, Good Mouse, than the gift of Foreverness, even under these dubious circumstances. You shall truly be a mouse among mice hereafter!"

Then, trying to stifle his laughter, Yabool-Syn donned a pair of heavy protective gloves and face mask, and, with delicate care, inserted a small eyedropper into that horrible bubbling mass of sparks, extracting a few precious drops of the terrible potion.

"And now, little mouse", Yabool-Syn whispered as he placed the instrument into the tiny mouth and released a few drops down the rodent's throat, "Be good and quiet and taste that of which the poets dream — taste Foreverness, and tell me if it be a good or bad thing to partake of".

IV.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

Well our little mouse soon began to show catastophic effects which caused Yabool-Syn no end of concern or fear — concern and fear for himself, of course — not for our little friend, Sir Mouse.

"Why see how his body shakes and convulses, see how the tiny limbs grow rigid and the eyes red, large and cold". Yabool-Syn mumbled as he paid careful attention to his surrogate messenger. Now the puny creature stirred and twisted and then began to run around the cage, mindlessly, again and again, to finally collapse and fall to the floor motionless and, apparently, lifeless. It was an unmistakable reaction and boded only ill for the promise the potion offered, dashing all the master mage's plans into failure and alarm. For now he must find some safe manner to dispose of this potion — which was now, not only useless to

his plans, but a potential danger to himself as well.

"Foreverness". Yabool-Syn murmured with genuine sadness, as tears dripped down the furrows of his long, old face, "Something I shall not be tasting. Meanwhile I have yon foul elixir, created after so much hard work and peril, which must now be destroyed before it destroys me".

The mage of Shenumbra then began a series of enchanted magicks and wondrous incantations to bring forth from the dust and clay a gruesome golem of gargoyle form.

"You shall drink of Foreverness and Nothingness, oh ugly gargoyle", Yabool-Syn commanded. The horned monster flapped its wings, talons and jaws as it's clawed feet approached the terrible elixir, picking up the container with it's mighty, stone paws.

"Now drink! Drink it all and drink deep, trusty gargoyle and you shall discover Nothingness and Foreverness and eons hence when my time of life lapses you shall be recalled and resurrected to guard the crypt of Earth's greatest mage, in this last and greatest of its cities".

And after drinking the entire elixir the Gargoyle of Crypts was caused to vanish and Yabool-Syn once more turned his attention to the lifeless little mouse laying so quietly upon a leaf of lettuce in his lonely cage.

"Foreverness is not such a desirable commodity as I once thought, Little Mouse, better to give it to that ugly monster than take any chances". Yabool-Syn said in a whisper. "It seems, all things considered, to have been a rather unsuccessful venture".

"I think not, Master Mage". A voice resounded in the old magician's head. It was a tiny voice, and a quiet one, but a strong one nethertheless and it came from the small mouse which was now beginning to stir and sit up on hind legs, eyes looking full into the face of Shenumbra's greatest sorcerer.

"Little Mouse", Yabool-Syn stammered in evident surprise, "You are well? Then there are no ill-effects from the elixir?"

"None, Master Mage", The mouse replied with a toothy smile and a serious twitching of his tiny nose. "As you can see the elixir has restored the artificial enhancement of my intelligence as well as confirming upon me the gift of Foreverness".

"I see that only too well, Sir Mouse". Yabool-Syn replied with his anger now warming over his injudicious loss of such a valuable elixir. "And furthermore, I see that you tricked me as well, with your choice of petal from The Rose".

"It was all for the good, My Lord Magician". The mouse responded with a sharp stare into the cold orbs of the wizard. "Had you sampled the elixir the consequences to your person would have been dire and tragic. But for a tiny and insignificant mouse the effects proved negligible and the virtues many. For now I am besotted with all manner of talismantic and necromantic lore and possessed of vast reserves of strength and power, which can be combined in many interesting ways with my new found knowledge".

Yabool-Syn rubbed his whiskered chin thoughtfully as he mulled over what the tiny creature before him was saying. This little mouse might prove more trouble than he was worth — for the arch-mage did not like what he was hearing at all — such bold words from a former messenger

and servant did not have a pleasant ring in the mage's ears one little bit. Did this tiny rodent now deem himself a competitor, or more, to the great wizard of Shenumbra? Yabool-Syn knew that where magic rules stranger things than this had happened and that he would have to tread carefully in his dealings with the tiny mouse.

"I warn you, Sir Mouse, not to seek hegemony over Yabool-Syn, who is your rightful lord and master. Whatever your new gifts and talents, it is best to keep them unused and to yourself, rather than cause concern amongst myself and others of similar interests".

The mouse smiled with a delightful twinkling in his eyes and a twist of his long tail. "I did not ask for your gifts, Sorcerer, neither the former or latter ones".

"That is true". Yabool-Syn responded, but his mind was already wondering for what mischief and missions he could use such an interesting creature. Nevertheless this mouse did present a serious potential danger to him as well, and Yabool-Syn did not like to dwell upon those realities - for magicians of equal power and steeped in the same dark lore, when at war with one another, tend to cancel out the existence of each other. It was a sobering thought, and boded much caution on his part, for the master mage was not such a fool to be misled by the mere outward form of the tiny creature before him, which was actually a powerful being of devastating potential and unknown direction. "And so, Sir Mouse, what are your plans and desires? I warn you that revenge is a double-edged sword that can bring misery to the wielder as well as the recipient".

"How wise you are, for a man, Master Mage". The tiny mouse replied with a darting smile.

"We gain what we can, day by day, Sir Mouse". Yabool-Syn answered with a mild shrug of heavy shoulders. He watched the animal's bright eyes and the twitching tail that moved back and forth furiously as the mouse constantly sniffed the air currents surrounding him.

"But revenge, nor anger, are in my present repertoire, Master Mage". The mouse began, much to the magician's relief. "For now that I have my intellect back where it belongs, I remember much that was forgotten upon my hasty return from the domains of Topaz".

"And that was...?" Yabool-Syn prompted with renewed interest.

"That there are many thousands of petals which make up The Rose of Exumanities and that one of them contains the essence of an entire world of mice such as I - imagine the implications, if you will, Master Mage - an entire world where *mice are men* and *men are not*!"

"Sir Mouse!" Yabool-Syn demanded of the blasphemous rodent, but already the tiny creature was gone - floating in the dreams that make up Topaz, approaching a many petalled blossom and finally making his own choice as to what he deemed the meaning of reality and then seeing to it that his dream take shape, form and substance all around him.

Meanwhile, deeply ensconced within the magician's lonely manse of cold stone, the master of apothecary and all manner of necromantic skills recalled to life the hideous golem from the clay and dust of his surroundings.

It was not a happy magician who stood so still and crestfallen as the Gargoyle of Crypts appeared before him. The two watched each other coldly.

"To be bested, and bested by a mouse of all the lowly creatures of creation! How can any magician live down such shame and insult? How can any magician continue in the light of such knowledge?"

Yabool-Syn sighed heavily. A deep, dark tiredness had overcome him and he needed no talismantic auguries or charms to tell him that his allotted time had now run out and that the moment when he would enter the Great Dark of Death was fast approaching.

"Oh gruesome gargoyle, you who stand there quietly and leer at me in such wicked fascination. Now it is time for you to take up your eternal vigil at the entrance to my death crypt, as sacred purpose fills the empty void between Foreverness and Nothingness until your very last days. In such privileged manner shall you serve me until that last moment when Foreverness itself runs into the eternal dark of Nothingness".

And the Gargoyle of Crypts just smiled out and said "Sure, Boss, whatever you say".

CRAWLING AT YOU

(Continued from page 5)

writing. For further details of HPLHS projects, why not send for a sample of their newsletter *Strange Eons*, available from the Society's British agent, Dave Hodson, 104 Debden, Gloucester Road, Tottenham, London N17.

NEW NECRONOMICONS

Necronomicon Press have recently issued *Clark Ashton Smith: Letters to H. P. Lovecraft*, a 68 page collection of rare correspondence in which Smith gives his side of things to letters published in the Lovecraft *Selected Letters* volumes. Also included in the book are letters to Derleth in which Smith clearly states his thoughts on the Mythos and argues that Derleth's beliefs concerning the tales as being representative of the christian parallels of good versus evil are fundamentally opposed to Lovecraft's cosmic visions. A very interesting book which should be in all collections. The tome is available from Dagon Press at £5.50.



MACHEN REVIVAL

The Arthur Machen Society have just released Issue Number One of their Machen journal, *Avallaunius*, which contains a wealth of news, information and appreciations on the great writer. For anyone interested in Machena nd his works, membership to the society is a must. For further information send a SAE to Rita Tait, 19 Cross Street, Caerleon, Gwent NP4 1AF. Annual membership costs £7.50.

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YOU IN YOUR SMALL CORNER

A Call of Cthulhu Scenario by Andy Bennison

*Jesus bids us shine with a cool clear light,
Like a candle burning in the night.
In this world of darkness so we must shine,
You in your small corner and I in mine.*

Old Sunday School Hymn

After disappearing for three days, Catherine Young has turned up at Greenbank House, a mental asylum. The player is either a concerned friend, a private investigator hired by her family, or a reporter eager for a story.

Sources of Information

Catherine's husband, Bill, is too distraught to see anyone. He blamed himself for what has happened. Their marriage had always been stormy, but they had always managed to patch things up. Anyone wanting to see Bill will first have to get past his brother-in-law, Michael Harris, who has brought his pet alsation dog with him to deter unwanted visitors. If investigators attempt a *DEBATE* roll and succeed, Michael will reveal that the Youngs last argument concerned a trivial matter regarding choice of which television station to watch. After that Catherine walked out, not to be seen until three days later when she appeared at Greenbank House, totally paranoid and quite out of her mind. Catherine's belongings have been returned, but as yet Bill has not examined them. Three important clues can be found in Catherine's handbag. Each requires a *SPOT HIDDEN OBJECT* roll to discover. The items are an unfamiliar key, a receipt from "Emily's" for £2.10 and a slip of paper upon which Catherine has scrawled:

"AH 46, Museum Press 50, Belmont 63, Panther 75"

The couple living next door, the Elliotts, will be only too happy to gossip about their neighbours rows and fights. They will spare no details, and even invent a few to impress their audience. "Living with a man like that is enough to send anyone 'round the bend - nosy bastard!" Mrs. Elliott will say to anyone who will listen. However, if other residents are questioned it will become apparant that the two families have held a long standing feud ever since the time that Bill Young reported the Elliott's son to the police for receiving stolen goods. Joey Elliott was released from prison two weeks ago, and is currently living with his parents. (If the Elliotts are not interviewed, then Mrs. Elliott will certainly arrive on the scene to offer 'help', so that she can find out what her neighbours have been up to this time).

At Greenbank House Catherine sits in a catatonic trance in the centre of her padded cell. Occasionally she sings the first verse of a hymn

she learnt in her childhood. Attempts to move her have met with a violent reaction. Seeing her costs One point of sanity if a roll fails. This loss is automatic to anyone who knew her well. Catherine's doctor will tell how she walked into Greenbank and *demand*ed to be locked in a padded cell for her own protection. Once inside, she seemed very relieved, and it was only then that she regressed into her current state. Only friends and P.I.s will be given this information. Reporters will have to resort to *FAST TALK* and *BRIBE* rolls on the less professional members of staff at Greenbank to learn the truth.

"Emily's" can easily be located in the local *Yellow Pages* directory. It is a tea room in a nearby run-down seaside town. None of the staff at "Emily's" can remember Catherine. Anyone visiting the place and succeeding in an *IDEA* roll will notice a hotel situated across the street. If they don't notice it, they will certainly spy the police car parked outside.

The Regal Hotel does not live upto it's name. As the investigator enters two policemen will be seen questioning the receptionist about a man called Ron Parrish, evidently an employee here, who is missing. After a few negative answers they will leave. Catherine stayed at the hotel for the three missing days, signing the register in her maiden name (anyone not checking must make a successful *SPOT HIDDEN* and *IDEA* roll to make the connection). As far as the staff know "Miss C. Harriss" is still staying here. According to the register book she is currently in room number fourteen.

The key found in Catherine's handbag opens the door. The bed has not been slept in and the remainder of Catherine's belongings can be found here. At the foot of the bed is a metal detector, (her husband will explain that "metal detecting is her latest hobby"). On her bedside table is a very battered copy of an old paperback volume entitled *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos Volume 1*", edited by August Derleth. On the inside cover is a sticker that reads "A.J.'s Bookshop £3" (How much *CTHULHU MYTHOS* knowledge can be gained from reading is upto the Keeper. The stories in this anthology include "The Call of Cthulhu", "The Hounds of Tindalos" & "The Space Eaters" [FBL], "The return of the Sorcerer" & "Ubbo-Stahla" [CAS], "The Black Stone" [REH], "The Dweller in Darkness" & "Beyond the Threshold" [Derleth], "The Salem Horror" [Kuttner] and "The Haunter of the Graveyard" [J. Vernon Shea]).

"A.J.'s" is a dilapidated building in the worst part of town. The sign outside reads:

Specialist Adult Books, Magazines and Videos.
American and Scandinavian Imports.

The shop's sleazy owner, Mr. Jones, charges extortionate prices for the filth he peddles. As well as the expected stock there is a pile of horror books, including some by Lovecraft, Howard and Machen. Jones will not volunteer any information unless the investigator spends some money — at least ten pounds — he will remember Catherine and leer slightly. He will say that she was looking for a particular book, the title of which has just slipped his memory. A further purchase will cure him of his amnesia: the book in question was Frank Belknap Long's *The Hounds of Tindalos*. He will say that Catherine did not find what she was looking for, but was more than satisfied with what she did buy. If anyone asks Jones about other books, he will smile evilly and say that he has a copy of the *Necronomicon*. He will admit that it is slightly damaged, but

he will not part with it for anything less than £50. Anyone foolish enough to hand over the cash will be presented with a copy of the 1977 H. R. Giger version — and serves them right too! (Jones gives no refunds and has some very nasty and violent friends who just happen to be in the backroom watching a private screening of one of Jones's under-the-counter video films).

Background Notes

"... And so Verdhis the Black imprisoned in the stone of Jhrelth a being of great power, Rrhar'il. Evil and malevolent was Rrhar'il for it could follow any man and track him down by the magic within it. Anyone who looked at that foulness could not escape, even if they hid in the deepest cave or fled to the far shores of Mhu Thulan. Still Rrhar'il could track them and feast on their flesh. Through mighty spells Verdhis trapped Rrhar'il's soul inside the stone of Jhrelth, and used the demon to kill his enemies and threaten all of Mhu Thulan... But the stone was stolen by Ydway of The Five who hid it from Verdhis. The mage's men tortured Ydway for many long months but he would not reveal where the stone was hidden. And so it was that the power of Verdhis the Black wained..."

THE BOOK OF EIBON

To finish the tale, Ydway hid the stone in a casket and buried it. The secret of its location died with him and the stone of Jhrelth laid undiscovered for many centuries.

After she fell out with her husband, Catherine decided to spend a few days alone to think about her marriage. She idled the time away beachcombing. Early one morning she discovered an iron box, marked with a star-like design on the lid. She took it back to her room, opened it and found inside a stone. After gazing into the stone Catherine began to suffer from strange nightmares of the demon contained within it, actually a Hound of Tindalos.

The next morning, Catherine remembered stories that her late uncle used to read to her from a pulp magazine that he called *Weird Tales*. She tried to get hold of a copy of Long's story to refresh her memory. At first she had no luck, but she did manage to trace some of the book's printing history. There is a 50% chance that any local librarian or second hand bookseller will remember her. At "A.J.'s" she found the story she had been searching for, and after reading it in the tea room situated across the street, she realised how to save herself from the monster that was now stalking her. She had herself admitted to Greenbank House, knowing that Rrhar'il could not get to her as long as she stayed in the padded cell. However, her dreams were still haunted and she soon grew insane. She constantly repeats "You in your small corner" to remind herself of the danger, but she is still vulnerable because she has left the stone in her hotel room.

The Theft

The stone was stolen by Ron Parrish, a dishonest domestic at *The Regal*. This occurred on the morning that the investigations began. That very night Ron Parrish will look into the stone and suffer the same nightmares that Catherine had. Next day he will sell the stone to his friend, Joey Elliott. The very next morning Parrish's mutilated corpse will be dis-

covered by the milkman on his rounds. Newspaper reports will mention Ron's criminal background, as well as his associates, including Joey Elliott. Joey will now start to have the dreams. He will try to sell the stone but no one will be interested and so he will hide it in the next door neighbours garden. He will still suffer the dreams, but will otherwise be safe until the stone is uncovered. If the investigators have not found the stone within one day, then Michael's dog will dig it up. Joey will soon die, and Bill, Michael and anyone else in the house will be in great danger. If the police discover the stone, then further deaths will result.

The Stone of Jhrelth

The stone itself is a semi-transparent crystal of many sides. A strange colour seems to run through it, but the pattern constantly changes shape. Anyone gazing at these colours who fails to make a *LUCK* roll will look into the stone and see Rrhar'il (Sanity loss is 1d20 or 1d3 if successful). That night anyone who has seen the Hound will suffer the nightmares. Victims will dream of the history of the stone and the evil of Verdhis, (resulting in 1d6 automatic *SAN* loss). On the following night the dreamer will see himself chased and devoured by the Hound (once more an automatic sanity loss of 1d6 is incurred). The second dream will continue each night until the victim is driven insane. Anyone examining the stone and making a *GEOLOGY* roll will conclude that the crystal is made of no known substance. The stone weighs very little and is extremely difficult to damage.

The crystal is housed in an iron box that bears the Elder Sign. Inside is a cushion of thick velvet-like material that moulds itself perfectly around the stone, holding the crystal in place. To attack, Rrhar'il must first leave the stone of Jhrelth through one of its corners, so while the box lid is closed, everyone is safe. However, should someone open the box up...

The Hound will attempt to devour anyone who sees it. It will then return and kill any witnesses. If the stone is somehow destroyed, the Hound will be free. It will devour anyone who has seen it before returning to its own dimension. The safest thing to do is hide the stone and hope that no one else ever finds it. This will gain the investigators 1d10 sanity points. However, a further 1d4 points will be lost when it is realised that nothing can be done to save Catherine from madness or death.

Playtest Notes

This one is a no win situation. The scenario tends to involve detective work rather than monster bashing. There isn't any point in rolling out statistics for Rrhar'il because magical weapons are needed to hit Hounds of Tindalos. Any fights will be short and one sided. An idea which did occur in the playtest is worth mentioning. If any smart alec decided to contact Frank Belknap Long, he is, unfortunately, on holiday at the moment. No one knows where he is, but he will doubtless return once the scenario is over. What a pity, now there was someone who could really have helped.

FANTASYCON XII

My Appointment With Fear

by Carl T. Ford

The weekend spanning 4-6th of September saw the annual pilgrimage of fantasy fans travel to Birmingham for *FANTASYCON XII*, the convention held by the British Fantasy Society. This year I thought I'd write a report of the proceedings for *Dagon* readers in order to let you lot know what evils and unpleasantries can be gained by, firstly, joining the BFS and, secondly, attending its yearly convention.

The British Fantasy Society membership includes a fantastic amount of professional writers, artists, editors and publishers from the fields of science fiction, fantasy and horror literature and so it comes as surprise that the annual gathering attracts a high number of personalities from the fields of fantasy - many of whom appear on various panels, signing sessions, or give readings and discussions of their work.

This year the con kicked off at 6.00pm with registration, followed by the opening of the dealers room, where one might find such rarities as proof copies of Barker's *Weaveworld*, rare Arkham House, Lovecraftiania, and other assorted tomes. Throughout the weekend a number of rather "sleazy" videos are run, often under the supervision of *Shock Express* masters Stefan Jaworzyn and Kim Newman. This year the films included such subtle classics as *Zombie 3*, *The Undying Monster* and Andy Milligan's horrendously boring *Torture Dungeon*. If these movies seem tacky, that's good - the BFS prides itself in presenting curiosity pieces for the sleaziest of gorehounds, which means that the movies you see here will probably be the only screenings you'll ever stumble upon.

The first of the major parties kicked off at 8.30pm on the Friday, thrown by the "Writers of the Future" group. Such parties always present an ideal chance to knock down some free wine, chat to those guys whose work you've always admired or hated and generally enjoy yourself. The events run long into the evening as horror master Charles L. Grant teamed up with editor and fellow author Douglas E. Winter to present an excerpt from their new novel *From Parts Unknown* - a black comedy horror which promises to be one to look out for later this year. Further reading of the evening was supplied by Clive Barker with a few chapters from his eagerly awaited *Weaveworld* which was recently published by Collins. The novel marked a departure for the author from his blood-drenched offerings of his past published tales, and from the reading presented here I believe that it will claim an even larger audience from the fantasy crowd.

Saturday saw several panel discussions which posed the questions "What chances do up-and-coming writers have of being published?" and "How difficult is it to invent a new universe?" - which included such celebrities as John M. Ford, Terry Pratchett, Adrian Cole and Craig Shaw Gardner.

Iain Banks was on hand to sign copies of his masterful science fiction novel *Consider Phlebas* and his earlier horror novels *The Wasp factory* and *Walking on Glass*, as was Jonathan Carroll to sign his cult hit *The Land of Laughs* and his new novel *Bones of the Moon*. Amongst other great things on Saturday was the Guest of Honour Slide Show given by J. K. Potter,

which presented us with a fascinating history of the artist's work, style and views as well as some truly beautiful(?) examples of his horror illustration, ranging from his early Lovecraftian pieces to the more disturbing imagery that has recently featured in the Scream/Press editions of Campbell, Etchison, Barker and King.

Saturday evening was rounded off with Steve Jones and Jo Fletcher's wonderful double-act - "The Interminable Fantasy Raffle" where amongst the rubbish one could win signed proof copies of Barker, proofs of Campbell's *Dark Feasts* and unexpurgated Shawn Hutson. Further excuses to get drunk were provided with the party launch of Ramsey Campbell's *Dark Feasts* collection accompanied with more free wine and "The Eerie Midnight Horror Show II" which included Dennis Etchison (moderator), Charlie Grant, Karl Wagner, R. Chewtwynd Hayes, Shaun Hutson and Brian Lumley. Such subjects were raised as synchronicity of events told in the authors work, the writers beliefs in the subjects they write about, censorship and the supernatural. All of which added up to a very entertaining panel. The show went on until the wee hours of the morning with one of the aforementioned horror videos, which sent everyone off to bed nicely.

The final day of the gathering kicked off with a video showing of Tod Slaughter's *Crimes at the Dark House* followed swiftly by Dennis Etchison reading a new short story. I missed both of these attractions and had to rush my coffee down in order to make my way to the "I like drawing monsters" panel, upon which I was supposed to moderate. Unfortunately Dave Carson couldn't attend, due to trouble with his shoggoth, but an entertaining discussion of the work of J. K. Potter and Jim Pitts (don't tell him you like his rats!) crept upto midday. Having straightened my shaking hands I retired to the bar where the AGM of the Society announced its forthcoming plans for 1988, including details of the World Fantasy Convention to be held by the BFS in London next year (theme of Gaslight and Ghosts), be warned though, membership is strictly limited and as the BFS are expecting a huge amount of registrations from the USA for this event I would advise readers to book in advance as soon as possible if they have any intention to attend. Guest of Honour will be James Herbert, and a number of other writers and artists from the field have been approached to give lectures, panel discussions and readings of their work.

The convention was rounded off with the annual presentation of the British Fantasy Awards. A number of personalities could be seen chomping on the steak and some of those that won the awards this year were; Dennis Etchison for his short story "The Olympic Runner" (published in *Fantasy Tales*); J. K. Potter for Best Artist (knifing such stiff opposition as Stephen E. Fabian and our own Dave Carson); Stephen King for *It* (beating Brian Lumley's superb *Necroscope*) - his prize was collected by one of his publishing agent's whose name escapes me, Best Film was won by *Aliens* a derserved award, collected by Ramsey Campbell on behalf of Twentieth Century Fox, and Stephen Jones & David Sutton picked up the Best Small Press Award for the brilliant *Fantasy Tales*, (readers may be interested to know that *Dagon* was kindly voted runner-up). Congratulations all the winners and nominees!

Shortly after that the monstrous hoardes made their way from the Midland Hotel, Birmingham, back to their burial grounds. Some it may be said will never be the sane again...



The Acolyte

— by Sandy Petersen —

A vile rumour seems to be plaguing England that *Call of Cthulhu* is on the rocks or about to go defunct or something equally terrible. Not so.

Games Workshop will no longer be publishing its own CoC scenarios (except via *White Dwarf*) and it will cease distributing the game and its supplements except to its own chain of stores. This does *not* mean that CoC will no longer be available in England. Up to now, only Games Workshop could import our games. This monopoly has ended, and now any British distributor meeting our standards can import our games. Presumably this will make CoC more, not less, available.

Recently a review of the *Miskatonic Matriculation Kit* appeared in *White Dwarf*, listing the price of the Kit as £8.95. The actual British price is £4.95 — which is actually less expensive than the American version for a change.

Lest anyone be misled, the Kit is firmly tongue-in-cheek, keeping within the horror tradition upheld in "The Shambler From the Stars", *Re-Animator*, *Return of the Living Dead*, and Gahan Wilson's excellent cartoons. Comedy, we feel, is the lone genre which can be intermixed with horror without enfeebling the latter. BUT — if you feel that humour and horror are completely incompatible, the *Matriculation Kit* is not for you. Caveat.

Two other releases, also unsuitable for stodgy types, are the *Investigator's Kit* and *Cthulhu Conversion Kit*. The former contains materials important to every investigator — a copy of *Enigmatics* magazine (containing articles such as "How to construct spherical bedrooms"), a sheet of Elder Sign stick-ons and a scratch-and-sniff guide to Cthulhu Monsters (when you've covered your eyes to prevent losing sanity but still want to know what's eating you).

The *Conversion Kit* is for those investigators who have finally gone round the bend and joined the Sanity Zero legions. It has dust jackets for the various tomes of arcane lore — put them on your Britannicas for the look of a serious Mythos library. It also has leaflets promoting the Campus Crusade for Cthulhu and a pop-up cardboard statue of Cthulhu.

I'm not sure what aspect of the British market these items will appeal to. In the U.S.A., they are most popular among hardened Lovecraft fans (both Gahan Wilson and Robert Bloch have written us letters of commendation).

The next major item coming from Chaosium is *Cthulhu Now!* This is a 1980s supplement containing information on forensic medicine, modern weapons, prices, occupations, skills, and technology. Even thermonuclear weapons are discussed. The Question: "What happens when you nuke

Cthulhu?" The Answer: "He reforms fifteen minutes later, but now he's radioactive".

The Five Basic Techniques of Starting a Cthulhu Scenario

One major difficulty confronting every Keeper is to bring the investigators into a new scenario. Here follow a few investigation hooks. A "hook", in time-honoured role-playing jargon, indicates an event or hint to incite players' curiosity or inspire a scenario.

(1) An immense number of Cthulhu scenarios start out with "A friend is killed ...". Some players have begun to wonder if they have any friends left, since the only time they ever hear about one is posthumously. Despite the fact that this approach is a bit hoary, it can still be effective, especially when the death isn't immediately obvious as occult in nature, such as in *Spawn of Azathoth*.

(2) Almost as common is the hook of "You are asked to investigate ...". This doesn't work for every investigators' team, I fear. I don't know about your campaign, but in mine, the investigators have no formal agency through which they can be contacted. This approach must also assume that the contact has heard about your investigators' existence. On the other hand, this particular hook is a good way for getting investigators embroiled in adventures which they would otherwise never have heard of.

(3) An approach almost as oft-used as the two mentioned above is the mysterious newspaper article; "Weird Fuzzy Monsters Reported in Lesser Storpington" and such. If your investigators have large curiosity bumps, such articles can be excellent routes to get them into all sorts of interesting trouble.

(4) My personal favourite is to make the horror come to the players — to force them to react. For instance, in one of my own favourite scenarios, the investigators start out vacationing in the Alps. They arrive at the pleasant Schutzengel lodge, where they are welcomed by a buxom maid, a grizzled lodgekeeper, various husky Teutons that do the heavy work around the place and the usual crew of vacationers. In the morning, they discover that everybody is missing. Vanished. The vehicles are gone, the bridge leading back to the town is destroyed, and the investigators are all alone. This immediately rivets the players' interest, as it is clear that something is horribly wrong — and it directly affects the investigators!

(5) If you have the time to design scenarios with specific reference to individual players, you can involve their investigator's occupation or social file. A university professor, for instance, might be asked by a colleague to assist in some research he is performing, which then goes awry. Or a doctor might get a new patient, who suffers from a new, unclassified disease.

These five basic techniques should serve the average Keeper for years. Good luck and good hunting.

* * * * *

The Red Brain's Trust

by Peter F. Jeffery

First of all — there is a new address for foolish mortals who wish to consult the Red Brain:- 21 Meadvale Road, LEICESTER LE2 3WN.

When you remove a brain from the cavity in which it has been happily festering for years, you are likely to spatter gore all over the room. The carpets can be the very devil to clean afterwards. Remove the Red Brain from its cavity and you achieve a similar effect except that books and papers are spattered about in lieu of honest blood. They may be easier to remove from the carpets (if heavier) but for sheer bulk they beat a dozen bodies' worth of gore. I had hoped to be nicely settled into Meadvale Road by the time Carl needed this column, with all of your letters and my books readily to hand. Alas, the reality is a lot more sad and messy. Without your letters and my books within reach, I will have to content myself with a couple of queries which (I hope) I can remember, and which I can answer with scarcely a glance at a book. Somewhere, in an A4 envelope, I have a number of interesting queries. I hope that I will be able to start on these in *Dagon* #21. In the meantime, I apologise to those who must have expected their excellent questions to figure in this issue.

Back in *Dagon* #17, I made mention of a volume titled *Sleep No More* by L. T. C. Rolt. Mark Samuels of Sydenham wrote to ask me who L. T. C. Rolt was. Lionel Thomas Caswell Rolt (1910-1974) was not a Mythos author, but he did write some excellent spooky stories, which seem to have received less attention than they deserve, over the years. Not that Rolt himself is in any danger of being forgotten — indeed, the conference centre at the Ellesmere Port boat museum has been named the Tom Rolt Centre in his memory. The perceptive reader will already guess that Rolt is an author who bridges my twin passions for horror and for the canals. It is indeed so. In 1939, newly married, he set up home on the narrow boat *Cressy*, a Shropshire Fly (not that this will mean much to those of you who are not waterways enthusiasts). His aim was to make a living from writing, and his first two sales were of macabre tales, brought by a magazine called *Mystery Stories*. With the outbreak of war, the nation needed his engineering skills rather than his writing ones. *Cressy* spent the war moored at Church Minshull (Cheshire) and Tardebrigge (Worcs), but the Tardebrigge years did see the publication of his first book, *Narrow Boat*, a bitter-sweet account of a voyage through the Midlands on the eve of war. It was a success and now regarded as a canal classic. On a ghoulish note, it records a lock filled with dead rats here in Leicester. After the war, his collection of twelve horror stories *Sleep No More*, in 1948. My personal favourite is "Bosworth Summit Pound" which concerns bad things on a canal. I can easily identify the locale of this with a stretch of canal that I know quite well — I was once pretty thoroughly scared in a tunnel on this pound. I am assured that Rolt

conveys the eerie atmosphere of the place very well. Many of the stories draw, in some way, upon Rolt's engineering background, and these are probably the most effective of them. At about this time, Robert Aickman persuaded Rolt and a few others to join him in founding the Inland Waterways Association. Rolt and Aickman did not, however, long remain on friendly terms. Amid a vindictive campaign which Aickman appears to have instigated, Rolt left the I.W.A. on distinctly hostile terms. Eventually he left the canals, too, as *Cressy's* hull was found to be irretrievably rotten at the same time as his marriage disintegrated. It is not, perhaps, going too far to claim that Rolt was instrumental in starting Aickman on his career as a justly celebrated writer and editor in the domain of the macabre; starting with *We Are For the Dark* (1951) in collaboration with Elizabeth Jane Howard, another early I.W.A. member. Indeed, as the anti-Rolt campaign was proceeding with full venom in 1951, it may be that this book was an aspect of that campaign — an attempt to beat Rolt at his own game. It is a pity that Ms. Howard did not contribute further to the genre — her canal horror story "Three Miles Up" is a classic. The only reprinting, to date, of *Sleep No More* was in 1975 — the year following Rolt's death. Although Rolt had written no more macabre fiction since *Sleep No More* Hugh Lamb persuaded him to write two more such stories shortly before his death. These appeared in his anthologies *The Thrill of Horror* (1975) and *The Taste of Fear* (1976). Thus it was that Rolt's scary stories mark the beginning and end of his writing career, a career mostly devoted to non-fiction. These stories are amongst many which are ripe for a revival of interest.

Steve Hatherley wrote to ask me which stories belong to the Cthulhu Mythos. In the absence of my books, it is obviously impossible for me to start on a straightforward answer to this. However, it may be apt to raise — once more — the question of whether stories may be said to "belong" to the Mythos at all. August Derleth, Lin Carter, and a number of others, seem to have assumed that the Mythos is a body of stories, a sort of sub-genre. Dirk Mosig argued cogently that it was nothing of the kind — it was, rather like a series of concepts (the gods, the books, a framework of ideas) which the stories, in Mosig's word, "utilised". This may, at first sight, look rather like a semantic quibble. However, it can make quite a difference to our analysis. For example, in his book *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* Lin Carter argues that "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath" does not belong to the Mythos. I will not attempt to summarise Mr. Carter's argument, his book is not to hand and without it I doubt whether I could do him justice. But it may be significant that it would be difficult to argue that "Dream-Quest" does not "utilise" the Mythos. I cannot imagine that Mr. Carter would wish to claim such a thing. While admitting that the Mythos comprises a set of ideas rather than a set of stories, I am doubtful whether the word "utilise" will serve all our needs in describing how various stories relate to the Mythos. To return to *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* Lin Carter makes a good case for regarding "The Hound" as a Mythos story. It contains the very first reference to *The Necronomicon*, a volume which was, of course, to play an important role in the Mythos. If we ignore, for the moment, the question of whether it is possible for a story to "belong" to the Mythos, Mr. Carter's point seems to be indisputable. There is surely a strong link between the Mythos and the story in which the dread *Necronomicon* is introduced. However, it would be extremely odd to say that "The Hound" "utilises" the mythos, for had "The Hound" (R'lyeh forfend) been HPL's last story, we would have had no real reason to suspect the existence of a Mythos and it is very

doubtful whether Lovecraft himself would have suspected it. This being so, I would like to propose the term "fueling" for the stories which only seem to be part of the Mythos in the light of tales written afterwards. The proto-Mythos may also be a useful term for these early stories. This proto-Mythos will, of course, include stories which influenced Lovecraft, such as Chambers' "The Yellow Sign" and Machen's "The White People", as well as HPL's early efforts. For stories written a little later, where the Mythos is starting to take shape, we might speak of their "forming" the Mythos. "The Festival" may, perhaps, serve as an example of a Mythos forming tale. For works written still later we may usefully adopt such terms as "consolidating" and "extending", as well as "utilising". Surely "Dream-Quest" does something to "consolidate" the Mythos, rather than just "utilise" it. The same story may, naturally, relate to the Mythos in more than one of these ways. Most modern tales of the Mythos — such as the ingenious ones devised by Brian Lumley — may be aptly claimed to both "utilise" and "extend" the Mythos. Some of these stories appear to extend the Mythos a little too far for the taste of certain critics! It is my hope that this revised vocabulary may be of some service in thinking about what the Mythos is, and how it relates to the stories in which it is manifest. Above all, the Mythos should be considered a dynamic thing which is constantly changing, as it has been from its earliest beginnings. The analysis that stories imply "utilise" the Mythos seems to imply a static view — that there is a fixed Mythos to be "utilised". This is by no means the case, and should the Mythos ever cease to be in a state of flux, it will be a dead thing fit only for scholars to pick over. I do not think that I, for one, would wish to partake in such a post mortem. It is as a living, changing thing that the Mythos is interesting.

I hope that by the next time I try to compile this column I will be fully settled into my new crypt, complete with cats, my books, and your letters. Until then I wish you all pleasant dreams.

R.S. Games

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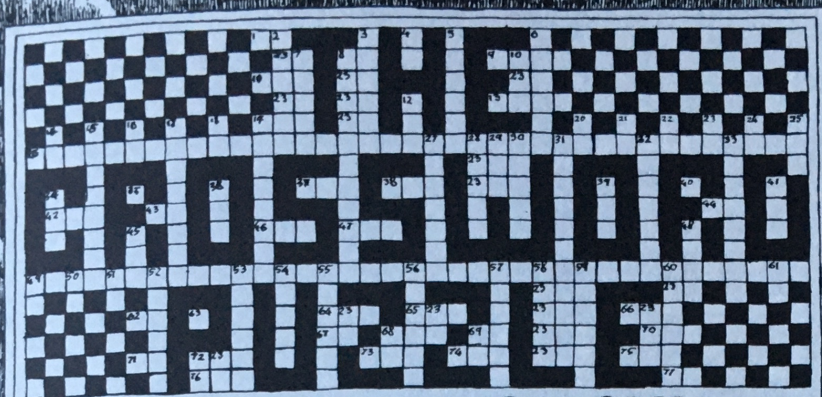
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COMPILED BY N. MARK GORDON.

CANDLEMASS -- THE SECOND DAY OF FEBRUARY ...

... A DAY OF FESTIVAL SINCE PAGAN TIMES.

JAMES WARD -- A NOTED WRITER OF GOTHIC FICTION -- HAS RISEN **EARLY**...

STILL SOME TIME BEFORE **HUNTLY** ARRIVES FROM **ALSWICH COLLEGE**...

MAY AS WELL READ THE **PAPER**... DO THE **CROSSWORD**...

IT WAS A POINT OF **PRIDE** WITH WARD THAT HE WAS ABLE EACH MORNING TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE IN HIS LOCAL PAPER.

HOWEVER, ON THIS PARTICULAR DAY...

FUNNY..! THREE OF THESE **CLUES** DON'T SEEM TO MAKE **SENSE!**

READING ALOUD, WARD RUNS THROUGH THE MEANINGLESS CLUES...

ONE ACROSS... TWO DOWN...
ULHUHTOS! HTOHTOS!
EIGHT LETTERS. SEVEN LETTERS.

ACROSS

1. ULHUHTOS
2. BOOIED
3. SPHERE
4. LIKE WITH STOLON
5. BACK OF NECK
6. CLOSE OFF
7. DRAWN OUT AT POLES
8. SINCE
9. MAGNITUDE
10. SORT OF SAX
11. VEHICLE
12. COOK IN OVEN
13. SLIDING
14. ...

DOWN

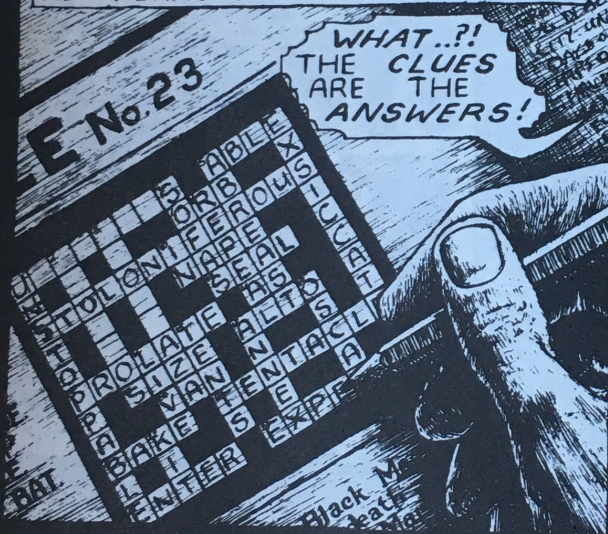
1. CANNOT BE HALTED
2. HTOHTOS
3. HTOHTAZA
4. SETTEES
5. SIDE BY SIDE
6. DRY UP
7. REVOKE
8. OAT THE PAT
9. ACTIVE
10. ARAB
11. DWELLINGS
12. LAKE
13. POSSESSION
14. FLY AWAY
15. ...



THREE DOWN...
HTOHTAZA!
EIGHT LETTERS!

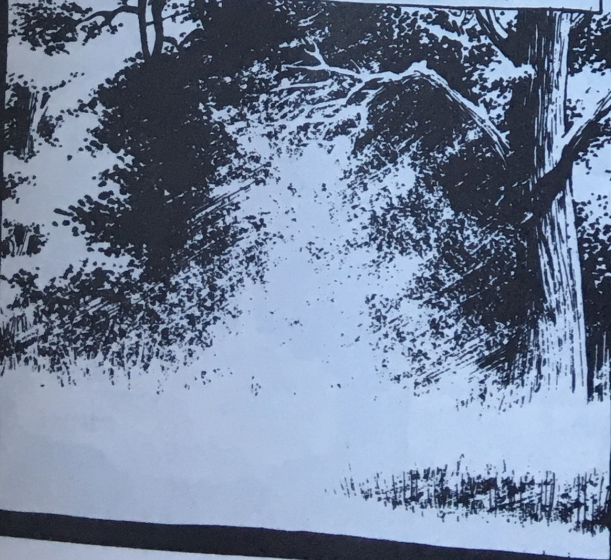
CAN THIS BE SOMEONE'S IDEA OF A JOKE?

INSIDE, WARD COMPLETES THE REST OF THE PUZZLE BEFORE HE REALISES...



WHAT...?!
THE CLUES
ARE THE
ANSWERS!

SUDDENLY, THE MIST IN THE GARDEN SEEMS TO THICKEN-- ALMOST TO TAKE SHAPE...



AT THAT MOMENT, OUT IN THE GARDEN, A STRANGE MIST BEGINS TO FORM.



REPEATING THE WORDS OVER TO HIMSELF, HE FILLS IN THE THREE REMAINING CLUES.

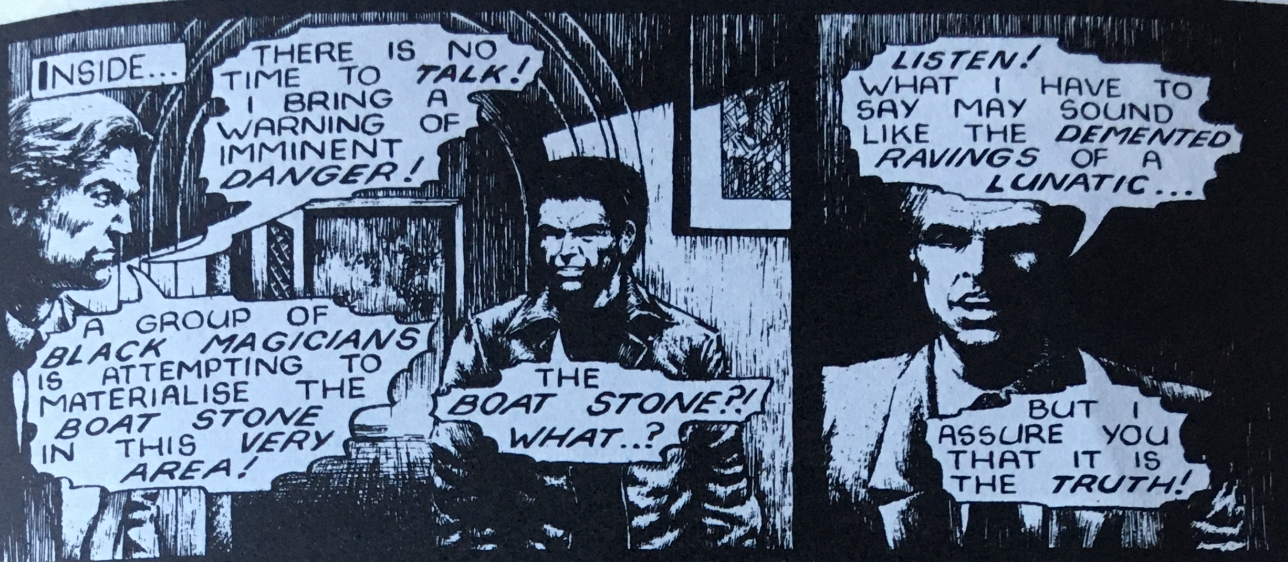


SOME TIME LATER, A CAR DRIVES UP TO THE HOUSE.

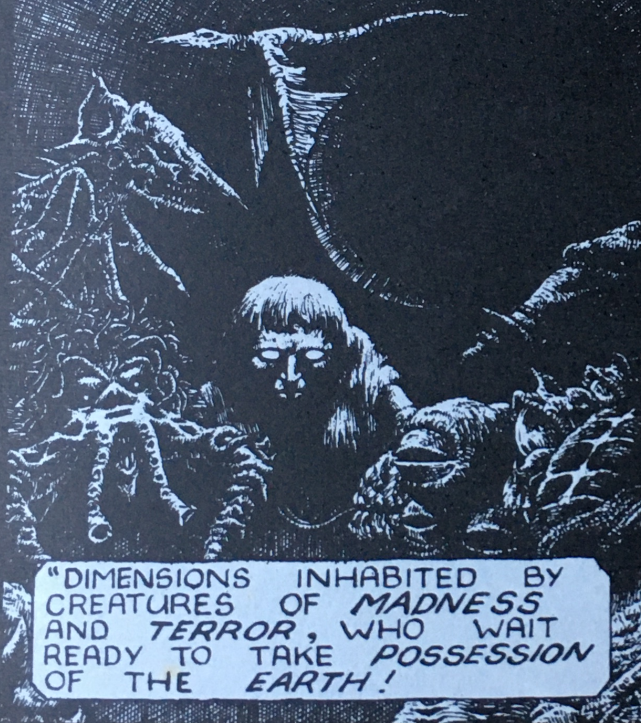


HELLO BYRON! I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU! COME IN! COME IN!

BYRON HUNTLY, PROFESSOR OF OCCULT SCIENCES AT ALSWICH COLLEGE, WAS A FREQUENT VISITOR...



"THERE EXIST *DIMENSIONS* OTHER THAN OUR OWN..."



"DIMENSIONS INHABITED BY CREATURES OF *MADNESS* AND *TERROR*, WHO WAIT READY TO TAKE *POSSESSION* OF THE *EARTH*!"

"TOWARDS THIS END THEY HAVE RECRUITED *AGENTS* AMONG MANKIND, WITH PROMISES OF *LIMITLESS* POWER AFTER THEY HAVE *CONQUERED*."

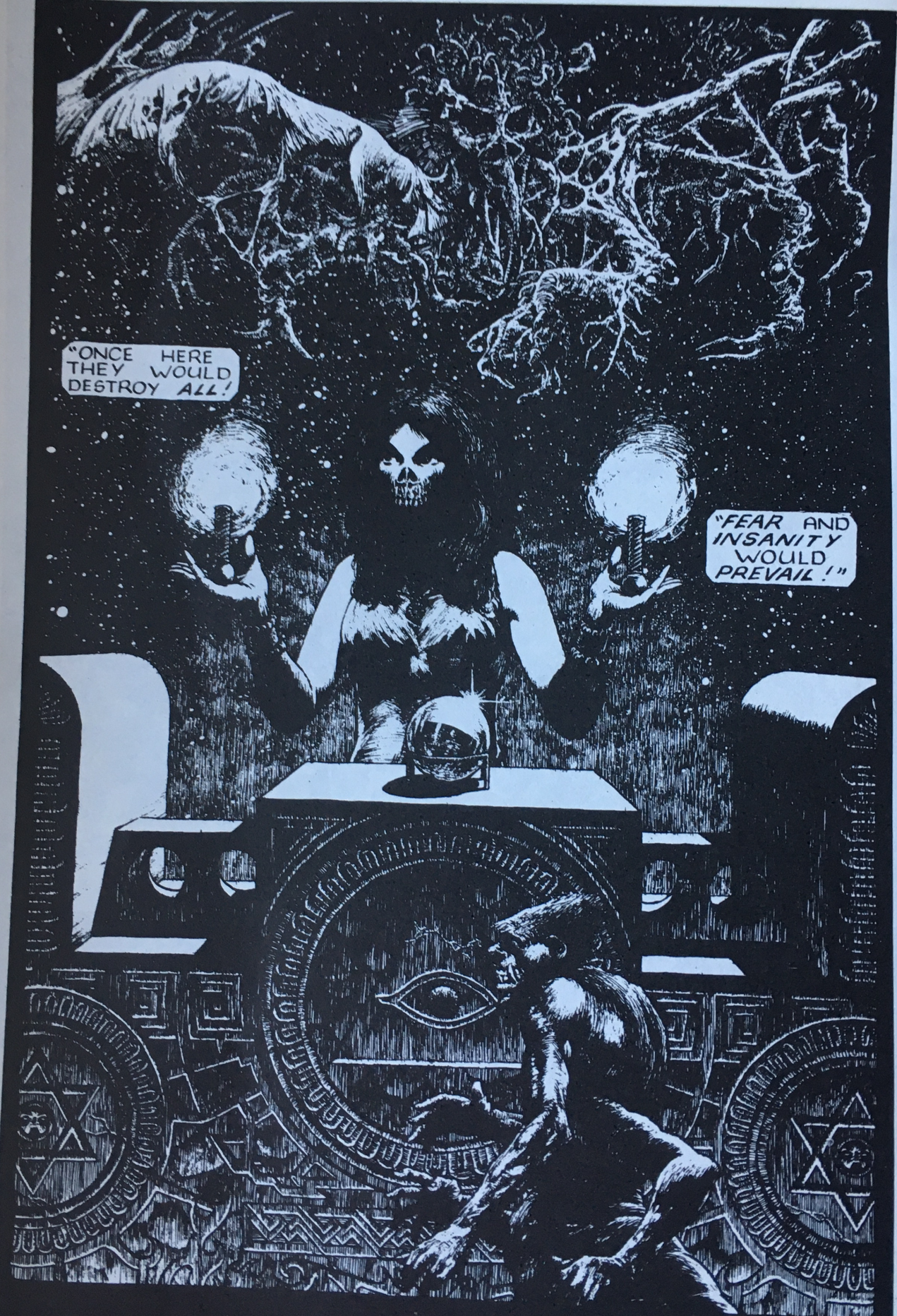


"BY THE USE OF *BLACK* MAGIC THESE HUMANS ATTEMPT TO BRING THE *BOAT STONE* WHOLLY INTO *THIS* WORLD."

"THE *BOAT STONE* IS AN ARTIFACT WHICH EXISTS PARTLY IN *OUR* DIMENSION AND PARTLY IN THOSE *OTHER* DIMENSIONS."



"WERE IT TO BE MATERIALISED ENTIRELY UPON THE *EARTH*, A *GAP* WOULD APPEAR *BETWEEN* THE *DIMENSIONS*, THROUGH WHICH THE CREATURES COULD *PASS* FREELY."



"ONCE HERE
THEY WOULD
DESTROY ALL!"

"FEAR AND
INSANITY
WOULD
PREVAIL!"

N. Mark London.

AND YOU SAY THAT THIS **BOAT STONE** IS GOING TO **ARRIVE HERE?!**

YES! THE TIME! THE PLACE! ALL THE PORTENTS ARE RIGHT!

NOW THINK! HAS ANYTHING UNUSUAL HAPPENED TODAY?

WELL... ONLY THIS MORNING'S CROSSWORD... THREE OF THE CLUES DIDN'T MAKE SENSE.

WHAT?! LET ME SEE!

WARD SHOWS HUNTLY THE PUZZLE...

PERHAPS THEY GO TOGETHER LIKE IN ONE OF YOUR CHANTS...

ULHUTOS! HTOHTOS!! HTOHTAZA!!!

WAIT!!

DON'T SPEAK THOSE WORDS ALOUD!!

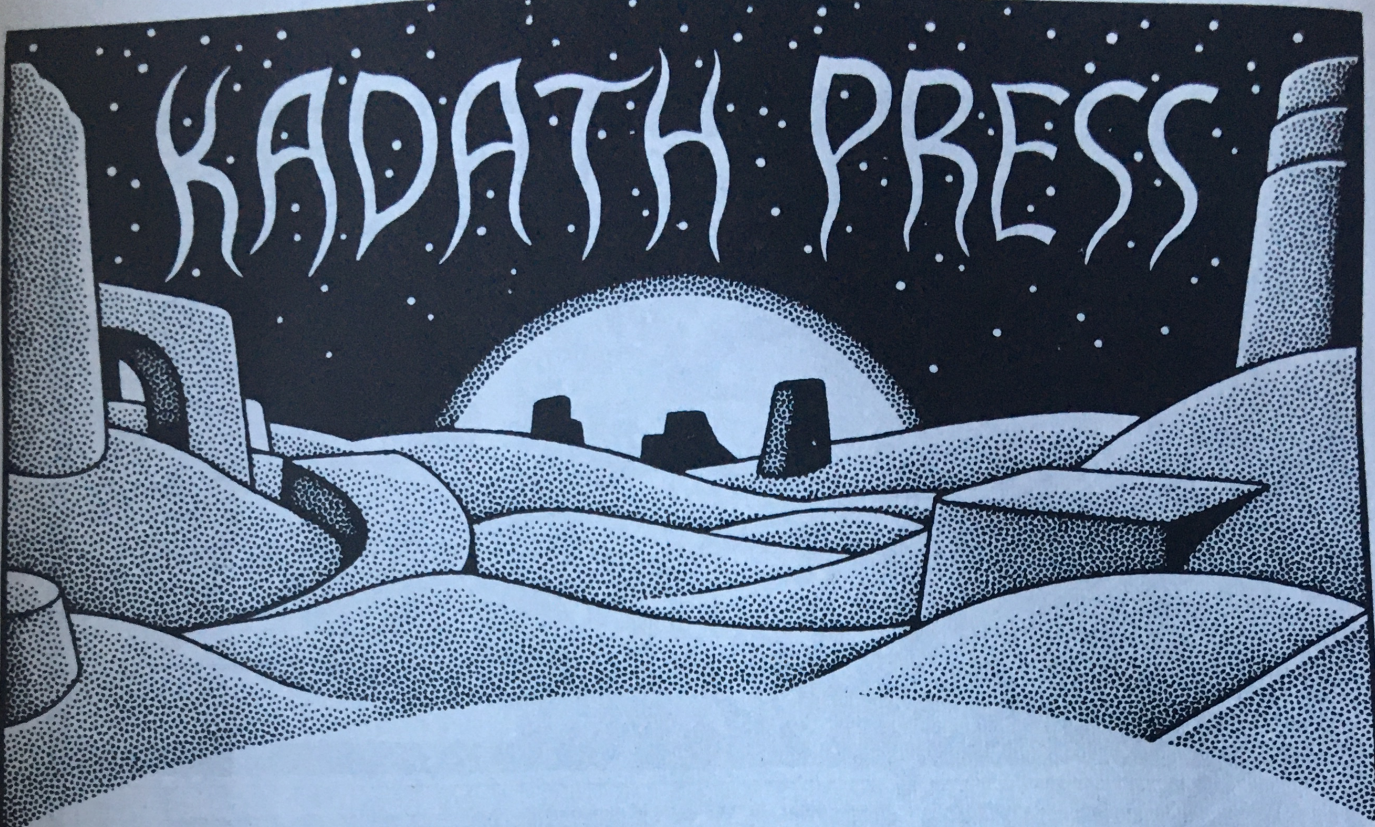
TOO LATE! - AS THE CHANT IS RECITED FOR THE THIRD TIME THE MIST IN THE GARDEN CLEARS...



...AND THE **BOAT STONE APPEARS UPON THE EARTH!!**



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The Stories of Murkales

Twelve Zodiacal Tales by D. F. Lewis

Parts I to V

I gratefully acknowledge the influence of Peter Jeffery, Clark Ashton Smith, H. P. Lovecraft, Arthur Machen, John Barth, E. R. Eddison, J. R. R. Tolkien, Llewellyn George, Alice A. Bailey, Hannes Bok, and, above all, myself in the perpetration of this work. I thank them all.

I.

Dat al Cursa

The vaunting Sorcerer Ash-Lesh was spoken of in *Glowing Terms*, a transitory magazine of the late thirties.

I recall the occasion on which I came across the periodical — amongst the garbage that littered Glasgow during the dustman's strike in the early seventies. I was a hawk-eagle hovering with the jostling wind above the stinking array of human waste, ready to pounce on any exciting titbit. Some may call me an uncouth dump-marauder, but how could I let pass away the valuable remnants and momentos of a dying race. I knew that in my hometime, scraps of careless writing or pieces of extinct thistle would fetch large sums of goodlife.

My name is Dat al Cursa, Cardinal of Taleh-Shedar, Head Stimulator of the Church of the Fall of Satan and Dredger of the Travelling Past. I reside amid the sandy hills and dry, barren escarpments of Taleh-Shedar in Ruckbah, where I live a reputable and arrowquick existence. Ruckbah is a country within time's margins — but where along its endless Tuesdays it reposes is the calculation of a man of more leisure than I. It is a land of wolves and deserts, billowing plains of arid pasture leading to the driest shimmering-zones that man has ever countenanced, a land of cutlass battles, coarse cuts and brutal torment. Taleh-Shedar, its capital city, rests like a vulture-ridden slaughterhouse by a vile oasis, a warship afloat the dry seas of rolling Ruckbah. It is a city replete with brick-kilns, sheep keeps, tool houses, blacksmith forges, houseless fireplaces and lime dumps. It faces East, a sharp shadow against a disruptive dawn.

To me, Time is Anger, an Irresistable Force of Fury impressing its mark and duration on the strongest and the frailest. As I journey through its violent meshes, along its steaming corridors of onward purpose, sometimes even against its very direction, I have felt uncurl within me a spark of its very anger, its pulse of ramming sickness and I have arrived at the time-destination in a state of narrow-visaged unapproachability. On that occasion I discovered *Glowing Terms* and its mention of

Ash-Lesh amongst England's debris, I tore its potential pricelessness apart to the jostling wind. No emptor would now parade its juicy contents in some unknown dawn of Taleh-Shedar, for my purest wrath could not withstand the quotation from Ash-Lesh on page twentylogue viz: "Dat al Cursa has no time for himself".

That phrase echoed and re-echoed as I sped back along the Tide of Time's Fist to the comfort of homely Taleh-Shedar. Fibres and hostile vessels mingled uncontrollably with the disseminated molecules of my granular time-corpse, rubbing rage into every corner.

I arrived in one piece. Taleh-Shedar, all dusty crannies, lime kilns and scrubby sheepfarms, landed beneath my feet and I immediately commenced to stamp and rant at the shimmering-sky that erupted above a new timescope. I made my way to the Church of the Fall of Satan in order to curse the image of Ash-Lesh and bewish Cetus to gnaw his very vitals — Fall of Satan be praised!

Entering the massive portals of the abattoir-cathedral, I raised my arms v-wise before the giant altar of fallen idols. There I espied a Cardinal meekly kneeling, hands pressed clammily together in mock prayer, before a gyrating device. His back was to me and I sliced him down in rage for his mealy gibberings. Ash-Lesh be praised for the prophecy — but I think I killed myself that day.

II.

The Casket of Baal

Click!...

An elegant garment of light drifted from Orion to Al Debaran and I, Asmodeus, plumbed the sky at its seeming inconsequent shift. The dancing stars, the concert drama of the night sky, were as canopy to the sub-lunar dreaming and scheming of my duty-filled nights.

By day I lent beside the shady feeding-places watching motley farm-workers and cow-girls visiting the mock-dairies and farm-equipment hangars; or I rested in the middle rooms of the Manor, preparing for yet another sunset when the cattle would wake and roam; or I gathered with the girls of the Manor in the wheat field to weave maypoles and garlands for the coming May rites.

As the cold, moist dawns beckoned the day with the bestial howling of the Manor lapdogs, the farm-people, passing from the sensuality of their beds, went with melancholy brow and bowed neck to the fields of their stoic endeavour and the venereal cows would moo dolorously and persistently as they caught of the heavy jaws of these their tenders. Sad, but self-reliant, these erotic mortals were models of farmly perseverance and, slow and steady, their emerald eyes would survey their property and even smile.

I was different. I was the night watchman. It was I who beat the cow-skins and made the leather. The farm was not concerned with beef, not concerned with milk. Leather was the trade and I the expert leather-maker. As the moon grew big and milky with queenly wantonness or small and warm as a dimpled scarf above the Manor, you would hear the rhythmic beating of my hammers on the hide and innards of the cattle, the screeching of the rusty stretchers.

The finished product was mostly intended for the tailors in the wine-town nearby — great sheets of wrinkled yellow skin rolled into barrels of cork and wax. However, from the udder and womb, I pummelled something special — my tour de force, the Casket of Baal. This, a thick, sturdy jewel-box of studded leather and grafted bronze, was formed from the thick wedges of gristle that was the cow's essential femininity and decked the undressing-tables of many a costly duke.

My brothers, Betelgeuse and Haggai, my sisters, Thadea and Eridama, each had one from me as a present on their name-days. The Squire of the Manor was the careless possessor of one, also. He, beefy and bull-necked, paced the middle rooms of the Manor, surveyed his property with pride, politely doffed his possessions to his countless lady friends and court-ously paid the farm-labourers with a pretty penny from his bottomless coffers. In his casket of Baal, he kept the prettiest penny of all, your soul!

... Click!

III.

Bashti-Beki

My name is Pi Mahi, captive of the sorcerer Bashti-Beki and loquacious defender of capture as a citizen's supreme right. Neurotic Mirzam claims that capture is bad for his nerves. Glib Dendera says that shackles are heralds of death itself. However, I, Pi Mahi, proud hostage in the upper backroom of Bashti-Beki's pillared halls, propose that cuffs are grey-hounds of night's splendid duality.

As you near Al Gomeiza, ten land miles from Taleh-Shedar, you will see from afar the twin-pillared portals of Bashti-Beki's great Hall, this the gateway with a grotesque monkey-statue perched on each side of the mammoth threshold. As you cross the barren hills, with the important message grasped tightly in your frostbitten hand, as you journey through the granary-towns and haystacked courtyards towards Al Gomeiza and as you flex your burdened shoulders and breathless chest for yet another supreme effort of self-negotiated trial, you will see Bashti-Beki at the centre of the great portals welcoming you. He, Bashti-Beki, caduceus aloft, waves, then, cunningly, disappears into the azure-blue of the Hall's interior to await your arrival.

At last, you enter the twinway and weave rumours among the bookcases and wainscotting of the corridors leading to Bashti-Beki's Room of a Thousand Walls. As you tittle-tattle with the hermaphrodites who fondle you as you pass, you hear the garrulous complaints of neurotic Mirzam in the far room. You spot the tell-tale bruises on glib Dendera's arms and, as he speaks, realise that his tongue is hinged at the middle.

You reach the Room of a Thousand Walls and there Bashti-Beki sits, making incoherent gibes at his dumb, paralytic twin by his side. An amazing sight, you will agree, but one that cannot match the next — myself, dragged from the upper backroom. I am thrown at your feet, all blood, sores and incurable asthma.

What is your message, O winged wit? What is your important message? Is it for me? You pass the script to my pulsating hand and watch the gruesome blood slowly drool upon it as I read. Bashti-Beki smiles as he sees

the expression on my face turn from one of joy to one of utter sorrow. The fidgetting letters are scored into my mind, as I hear the incessant wailing of distant captives, as I breathe in the coughs of my own and others' chests, as I lift my head to see you and the malevolent identical faces of Bashti-Beki and his twin.

The words of the message you brought are: "Your reprieve is nigh, for you will die by cancer, die by aids and live free in death, night and hell, live three — see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil".

Bashti-Beki stands and places his limbs x-wise before the Thousand Walls and I know now that Crucifix and Trinity are the Twins of his frightful sorcery!

IV.

The Lake of Canopus

My love, Maya, knelt beside the Lake of Canopus to purge dropsy from her body. I, hid amongst the moist undertow of a tributary marsh, felt the ebb and flow of her limbs' movement making me oysterish to the weft and woof moonstone ripples that she imbued.

As she, relieved and generative, removed her young flesh from the pacific sheet of liquid shine, I set out to follow my queen to her home far at Annaish by Taleh-Shedar. I scuttled along behind her mazy path and saw her naked breasts drip in benediction the holy lakewater to the ground before my snout.

Past the inns and wash-houses, she, the white poppy of my drugged journey made her nocturnal way; past the taverns and kitchens of a seamier side, through the rambling, wanton damp of outside cellars, along by lilyponds and dark maternity homes, she, the phantom of my germinal dream, continued her devotional walk. Unaware of my snuffling, clawing pursuit, she smiled as she passed a manger holding a baby ass by the beaten, moonlit track.

By a watertank of considerable size, stood a corner house facing north and she entered with not a glance to the left, right or behind.

I immersed myself in the watertank, ready to take advantage of the first opportunity. So, over the years, I grew small as the water shrank and wrinkled my skin into scabrous gristle and shrimpish insignificance. Instead of a huge snouted lobster filling the massive space of liquid, as I had at first been, I now lurked, a minute pumpkin, in the bottom corner of the stagnant brine. For an eternity of absorbing the tenacious environment into every corrupt pore, I awaited the reappearance of my shapely desire, Maya.

One night of fullest moon, the door suddenly swung wide and she, as beautiful as the scum of my long-forgotten marsh, hobbled forth. A strange tumorous burden seemed to weigh her down and her black nipples hung low above her smudged legs. The Cancer of the Lake had bitten into every vacillating vein and she grinned toothlessly as I raised my desiccated snout over the brim of the rust-corroded tank.

I fell upon the pollywog and loved her the night away. The clinging dawn found us as corrupt as long-dead worms knotted around the hardened sperm of a noxious water-spider. From Annaish by Taleh-Shedar the bereft scarab had already departed, dumb and dazed at his seemingly innocent

involvement in the coils of our embrace.

If you ever pass the Lake by night, watch the thrilling reflect of the fullest moon crossing its still waters and recall the tale of Maya & Canopus.

V.

The Crater of Ravens

The last words of Regulus were: 'A gold emblem cast amid the whirl is a sucking-core or flypaper'.

* * * * *

Alphard, the Ra of the Verchiel Hills, strode besworded towards the Crater, his fiery muscles almost bestial in their vital animation. He had been commissioned by Regulus, the Myrrh of Mithra by Taleh-Shedar, to seek out the Crater and destroy the pestilent ravens that swarmed numberlessly across its weathered mouth.

His flaxen curls swilling rapaciously over his corded neck, Alphard, the Destroyer of Darkness, took his cup of wrath across the sunn'd and sundered hills that reached roundly and highly over the deserts, fens and forests. His yellow-mocked feet slipped over the stones and gravel of ruined hill-castles and sloping, tumbledown forts and Noon beckoned unforgiving heat into even the shadiest corners of that barren adventure-playground. He cast never a glance at the remains of a funpalace or gaming-hall - but strode unwaveringly over the tilted slabs that were once the spine of a thriving civilization. He did, however, imagine the results of their last stand - the eyes pecked out on raw stalks from cored sockets, the bloodied limbs of fallen children fresh from play, the multitudinous petals of black feathers littering the orange clay of that feral plain and covering the still palpitating and bored corpses.

He bent under a sole-standing fireplace, now lost from its once homely skull and hesitated momentarily to sniff the redolence of a dead geeken trapped between the slabs of an inwards leaning sun-porch. This geeken, a giant lump of poultry on stilted limbs, seemed to peer with doleful eyes at the passing of the ardent Alphard. Although almost sympathetic to this and the dead race, he gulled himself with the unswerving loyalty of his cause and continued towards the Crater.

A herd of geekens scattered from the rim of the Crater, interrupted by Alphard's sudden arrival from their vigil of beak-clicking. Alphard leant haughtily over the edge and saw below the indefinable stormcloud of beating and pulsating wing-creatures glinting in the light of the torrid sun. How to dictate death to that myriad host of birdish black? So black that purple was it. And he waited.

As the heart of the sun dipped towards the round-topped hills of Mithra, Alphard had to strain to see the careering wings shimmer across the craggy sides of the deepening Crater.

At that moment, what seemed to be a snarling geeken butted Alphard into the swirling chasm! (He had not worried about the creature's close proximity since one had never attacked a human before). The golden locks of Alphard's flowing hair could be seen hitting the sheet of quintessential

black whirr, and, like orange ink, silted into the massive ebony blot.
Grinning Regulus, Myrrh of Mithra by Taleh-Shedar, stepped from the
theatrical skin of the mock geeken and, as the golden nucleus grew
giantly below him only to die from sight in the departing twilight, he
uttered the following imbecilic words:

"Stone the crows!"

He twittered as he went his way.

* * * * *

The final Stories of Murkales will conclude next issue. Ed.



The Journal of J. P. Drapeau

by Thomas Ligotti

Introduction

It was late and we had been drinking. My friend, a poet who can become very excitable at times, looked across the table at me. Then he started in on a pet grievance familiar to me from past conversations.

"Where is the writer", he began, "who is unstained by any habits of the human, who would be the ideal of everything alien to the living, and whose own eccentricity, in its truest sense, would turn in on itself to form increasingly more complex codes and patterns of strangeness? Where is the writer who has remained his entire life in some remote dream that he inhabited from his day of birth, and long before? Where is the writer from some mist-shrouded backwater of the earth — the city of Bruges itself, that place which has been described as 'a sumptuous corpse of the Middle Ages that sings to itself from innumerable bell-towers and lays bony bridges across the black veins of its old canals'.

"But perhaps our writer's home would have been an even older, more decaying Bruges in some farther, more obscure Belgium... the Belgium dreamed by Breughel and by Ensor. Where is the writer who was begotten by two passionate masks in the course of those macabre festivities called *kermesse*? Who was abandoned to develop in his own way, left to a lonely evolution in shadowed streets and beside sluggish canals. Who was formed by the dreams around him as much as those within him, who filled himself with strange learning because all learning would have been strange to him. Where is this writer, the one whose entangled hallucinations could only be accommodated by the most intimate of diaries? And this diary, this journal of the most unnecessary man who ever lived, would be a record of the most questionable experiences ever known, and the most beautiful".

"Of course, there is no such writer", I replied. "But there's always Drapeau. Out of anyone I can think of, he most nearly fits the bill. Living the whole of his life in Bruges, keeping those notebooks of his, and he—"

But my friend the poet only moaned in despair:

"Drapeau, always Drapeau".

Excerpts from the Journal

April 31, 189-

I have noticed that certain experiences are allowed to languish in the corners of life, are not allowed to *circulate* as freely as others. My own, for example. Since childhood, not one day has passed in which I have failed to hear the *music of graveyards*. And yet, to my knowledge,

never has a soul on earth made mention of this phenomenon. Is the circulation of the living so poor that it cannot carry these dead notes? It must be a mere trickle!

December 24, 189-

Two tiny corpses, one male and the other female, live in that enormous closet in my bedroom. They are also very old, but still they are quick enough to hide themselves whenever I need to enter the closet to get something. I keep all my paraphernalia in there, stuffed in trunks or baskets and piled quite out of reach; I can't even see the floor or the walls any longer, and only if I hold a light high over my head can I study the layers of cobwebs floating about near the ceiling. After I close the door of the closet, its two miniature inhabitants resume their activities. Their voices are only faint squeaks which during the day hardly bother me at all. But sometimes I am kept awake far into the night by those interminable conversations of theirs.

May 31, 189-

After serving out the hours of a night in which sleep was absolutely forbidden, I went for a walk. I had not gone far when I became spectator to a sad scene. Some yards ahead of me on the street, an old man was being forcibly led from a house by two other men. They had him in restraints and were delivering him to a waiting vehicle. Laughing hysterically, the man was apparently destined for the asylum. As the wrestling trio reached the street, the eyes of the laughing man met my own. Suddenly he stopped laughing. Then, in a burst of resistance, he broke free of his escorts, ran toward me, and fell right into my arms. Since his own were so tightly bound I had to hold up his full weight.

"Never tell them what it means", he said frantically, almost weeping.

"How can I tell them what I don't know?"

"Swear!" he demanded.

But by then his pursuers had caught up with him. As they herded him off he began laughing just as before, and the peels of his laughter, in the early morning quiet, were soon devoured by the peeling of several church bells. Poor lunatic. This was one of the most malignant conspiracies I had ever witnessed, the bells I mean. (They were everywhere). This was also what made me decide that I had better keep the madman's secret after all.

August 1, 189-

As a child I maintained some very strange notions. For instance, I used to believe that during the night, while I slept, witches and monkeys removed parts of my body and played games with them, hiding my arms and legs, rolling my head across the floor. Of course I abandoned this belief as soon as I entered school, but not until years later did I discover the truth about it. After assimilating many facts from various sources and allowing them to mingle in my mind, I realized something. It happened one night as I was crossing one of these bridges, I gazed not down into the dark waters of the canal, as I usually do, but upwards through the branches of overhanging trees at the sky. It was those stars, I knew that now: certain of them had been promised specific parts of my body; in the darkest hours of the night, when one is

unusually sensitive to such things, I could, and still can though just barely, feel the force of these stars tugging away at various points, eager for the moment of my death when each of them might carry off that part of me that is theirs by right. Of course a child would misinterpret this experience, but how true it is that every superstition has its basis in fact!

October 9, 189-

Last night I dropped in at one of the little theatres and stood at the back for a while. Onstage was a magician, shiny black hair parted straight down the middle, with full prestidigitorial regalia about him: a long box to his left (moons and stars), a tall box to his right (oriental designs), and before him a low table covered with a red velvet cloth littered with different objects. The audience, a full house, applauded wildly after each illusion. At one point the magician divided the various sections of an assistant into separate boxes, which he then proceeded to move to distant areas of the stage, while the amputated hands and feet continued to wiggle through cut-out holes, and a decapitated head laughed loudly. The audience was at great pains to express its amusement. "Isn't it incredible!" exclaimed a man standing beside me. "If you say so", I replied and then headed for the exit, realizing that for me such things simply do not hold much interest.

November 1, 189-

From the earliest hours of man there has endured the conviction that an order of being exists which is entirely strange to him. It does indeed seem that the strict order of the visible world is only a semblance, one providing certain gross materials which become the basis for subtle *improvisations* of invisible powers. Hence, it may appear to some that a leafless tree is not a tree but a signpost to another realm; that an old house is not a house but a thing possessing a will of its own; that the dead may throw off that heavy blanket of earth to walk in their sleep, and in ours. And these are merely a few of the infinite variations beyond the usual themes of the natural order as it is usually conceived.

But is there *really* a strange world? Of course. Are there, then, two worlds? Not at all. There is only our own world and it alone is alien to us, intrinsically so by virtue of its lack of mysteries. If only it actually were deranged by invisible powers, if only it were susceptible to *real* strangeness, perhaps it would seem more like a home to us, and less like an empty room filled with the echoes of this dreadful improvising. To think that we might have found comfort in a world suited to *our* nature, only to end up in one resoundly strange!

January 1, 189-

There is a solitary truth which, whether for good or ill I don't know, cannot yet be expressed on this earth. This is very strange, since everything — outward scenes as much as inward ones — suggests this truth and like some fantastic game of charades is always trying to coax the secret out into the open. The eyes of certain crudely fashioned dolls are especially persistent. And distant laughter. In rare moments I feel myself very close to setting it down in my journal, just as I would any other revelation. It would only be a few sentences, I'm sure. But whenever I see them beginning to take shape in my mind, the page

before me will not welcome my pen. I become fatigued with my failure. Afterward I suffer headaches that may last for days, and I tend to see odd things reflected in windows. Even after a full week has passed I may continue to wake up in the middle of the night, the silence of my room faintly vibrant with a voice that still cries out to me from another universe.

March 30, 190-

Out of sheer absent-mindedness I had stared at my own reflection in the mirror just a little too long. I should say that the mirror has been hanging from that wall for more years, I would guess, than I have been on this earth. It's no surprise, then, that sooner or later it should get the edge on me. Up to a certain point there were no problems to speak of: there were my eyes, my nose, my mouth, and that was that. But then it began to seem that those eyes were regarding me, rather than I them; that the mouth was about to speak things I had no notion of. Finally, I realized, an entirely different creature had been allowed to appropriate my face, making it wholly unrecognizable to me. Let me say that I spent some time wrestling my reflection back to a tolerable level of familiarity.

later, when I was out walking, I stopped dead on the street. Ahead of me, standing beneath a lamp hanging from an old wall, was the outline of a figure of my general size and proportions. He was looking the other way but very stiffly and very tense, as if waiting anxiously for the precise moment when he would suddenly twist about-face. If that should happen, I knew what I would see: my eyes, my nose, my mouth, and behind those features a being strange beyond all rational description. I retraced my steps back home and went immediately to bed.

But I couldn't sleep. All night long a greenish glow radiated from the mirror in triumph.

No Date

I had just finished a book* in which there is an old town strung with placid meandering canals. I closed the book and went over to the window. This is an old town, if medieval counts as old, strung with placid meandering canals. The town in the book is often mist-shrouded. This town is often mist-shrouded. That town has close crumbling houses, odd arching bridges, innumerable church towers, and narrow twisting streets that end in queer little courtyards. So has this one, needless to say. And the infinitely hollow sounding of the bells in the book, at early morning and sullen twilight, is the same as your sounding bells, O my lovely town. Thus, I pass easily between one town and the other, pleasantly confusing them.

O my storybook town, strange as death itself, I have made your mysteries mine, mine yours, and have suffered a few brief chapters in your sumptuous history of decay. I have studied your obscurest passages and found them as perpetually dark as the waters of your canals.

My town, my storybook, myself, how long we have all held on! But it seems we will have to make up for this endurance and each, in our turn, will disappear. Every brick of yours, every bone of mine, every word in our book, everything gone forever. Everything, perhaps, except the sound of those bells, haunting an empty mist through an eternal twilight.

* possibly the novel *Bruges-la-morte* (1892) by Georges Rodenbach. (T.L.)

R'lyeh Reviews

SCARED STIFF - TALES OF SEX AND DEATH

RAMSEY CAMPBELL. Published by Scream/Press, PO: 481146, Los Angeles, CA 90048. July 1987. 192pp Hardback. \$25.

Campbell's short horror tales have presented more than their fair share of characters who often find themselves placed in sensual surroundings and confronted with eroticism tinged with terror. This Scream/Press edition collects together Ramsey's very best "Tales of Sex and Death" and also presents two new pieces "Stages" and "Merry May" written specially for this edition. The book is brilliantly illustrated by J. K. Potter, who manages to convey Campbell's unique writing style very well, and a very perceptive introduction to the author's successful blending of eroticism and horror is supplied by Clive Barker.

One of Campbell's greatest skills as a writer is the ability to describe even the most commonplace of everyday events as something which can be made to appear, through the eyes of certain voyeurs, both sinister and ugly. In *Scared Stiff* the protagonists all find themselves involved in circumstances releasing their sexual desires, and once more Campbell uses his craft to show how sex itself can be a disturbing element.

"The Other Woman", reprinted from the 1976 collection *The Devil's Kisses* tells of how an artist becomes obsessed with his craft, falling in love with a fictitious model whom he paints on several book jackets. Slowly, the artist develops an infatuation with the model - who is depicted as being brutally throttled on his latest project - this infatuation takes over his personal life and we see the character corrupted by sexual obsession, which eventually leads to a horrifying climax.

"Lilith's", taken from *The Fifth Mayflower Book of Black Magic Stories* relates the sexual anxieties of a man who finds himself in love with a blow-up doll. The victim of this tale believes his 'Love Mate' to be the perfect woman - unlike his former love, the doll doesn't argue, never refuses sex, never becomes irritable and its featureless face and ageless body are moulded by its lover's mind into the most beautiful woman on earth. However, things aren't all roses as the protagonist soon discovers.

The above two tales are my favourites, both stories follow the same path and show how sexual desire in all its different forms can lead to mental breakdown and pain both mental and physical.

The other five tales in the collection are good samples of Campbell's ability to write on the themes of sex and horror and demonstrate how wide the author's descriptive style can range. All the tales are very good pieces of writing and since a number of the pieces are now out of print this collection is a must for any serious connoisseur of the macabre. *Reviewed by Carl T. Ford.*

NIGHT VISIONS

CLIVE BARKER, RAMSEY CAMPBELL & LISA TUTTLE. Edited by GEORGE R. R. MARTIN
Published by Century Hutchinson Ltd, London. 298pp. Hardback £11.95.

This collection gathers together original fiction by three of the most

celebrated authors working in Britain today. This third in the series of *Night Visions* collections originally published by Dark Harvest in the U.S.A. is the first edition to be published by a British company. Edited and with an introduction by George R.R. Martin of *Fevre Dream* fame the book boasts 30,000 words from each of its contributors. Clive Barker supplies us with "The Hellbound Heart" a 30,000 word novellette which forms the basis of his recent directorial film debut, *Hellraiser*. The story is full of the usual hallmarks of Barker; sex, graphic violence (though presented here to a lesser degree than the author's superb *Books of Blood* and *The Damnation Game*). The tale tells of two women who attempt to achieve love through a series of violent and bloody episodes. Stuck in the middle are two men, Frank a sadomasochist who has returned from beyond the grave (cheating a group of demons known as the Cenobites) to pursue his evil pleasure. Rory — Frank's brother — is married to one of the female protagonists, Julia who, infatuated by Frank's sexual appetite, decides to help him in his quests for the flesh. The other main character is Kirsty, Rory's daughter from a previous marriage, who attempts to help her father's marriage when she discovers that his new wife is being unfaithful. The combination of a torrid circle of desire, love and sexual perversion is dealt with quite impressively as Barker twists the plot to and fro in a work which, typical of its author, speeds along like an express train in its quest upon an unrelenting path of passion and violence. Whilst the Cenobites have a much smaller role here than in the film, the tale works just as well and is worth reading just for Barker's treatment of complicated relationships.

Ramsey Campbell's contribution is a series of seven short tales, dealing with a number of themes which we have come to recognise as hallmarks of Ramsey's work. The author's native city, Liverpool, provides the setting for the majority of the pieces and modern-day society again comes under attack for its bleak and uncompromising living conditions, social behaviour patterns and destruction of the environment. As usual Campbell supplies us with clever titles to the tales themselves. "In the Trees" and "Root Cause" deal with Campbell's use of druidic themes (previously dwelt upon in his novel *The Hungry Moon*) with nature, once more appearing to have a life and will of its own. "Missed Connection" is a very clever and observant piece involving a man's terrifying glimpses of premonition aboard a most uncomfortable train journey. "This Time" explores Campbell's thoughts on jealousy and again the author's skillful use of foreshadowing is used to great effect. Of the remaining tales my favorite Campbell contribution is "Bedtime Story" which tackles the problems of snobbery & declining education standards and disguises them brilliantly behind a nice little tale involving a child's fear of something lurking behind a bedroom mirror.

The final contributor to the book is Lisa Tuttle who supplies us with three superb examples of her craft which demonstrate why she is rapidly becoming a cult favourite of horror readers. Tuttle's protagonists are usually dominated by powerful females which provide a very fresh feel to her fiction. The tales presented here show that she can write horror just as effective as any of her male colleagues and I personally thought that her piece "The Dragon's Bride" was the best tale in the book. Tuttle explores themes of revenge, sexual awakening and change & death in three eerie tales. "Riding the Nightmare" tells of a woman's hatred for her lover's wife and of how her obsession takes shape in her dreams and has terrifying effect in the real world. "From Another Country" concerns a woman's desire to embrace death no matter what the consequences. Finally "The Dragon's Bride" tells the tale of a woman

whose loss of virginity has disastrous consequence for her lover, releasing a legendary horror for their actions.

Night Visions is one of the finest collections of short horror fiction currently in print. Congratulations must go to Century Hutchinson for giving the British public a chance to read this superb showcase of talent from three brilliant conveyors of modern-day terror.

Reviewed by Carl T. Ford.

ROBERT BLOCH

RANDALL D. LARSON. Published by Starmount House, Mercer Island, Washington, USA. 1986. 148pp. Trade Paperback. \$8.95. Cover by Steve Fabian. Starmont Reader's Guide No. 37.

The Starmont Reader's Guides are a standing series of bio-bibliographical books on authors of SF, fantasy and horror, edited by Roger C. Schlobin. Each book features a short chronology, a biographical essay on the author dealt with, and then various essays analysing his output. Each book has a good primary and secondary bibliography, and an index.

Who needs an introduction? Bob Bloch, 'the author of *Psycho*'? Well, yes, maybe he does since many people still identify him as just that, without knowing that Bloch has been around for many years, since the early pulps, admired by his readers and loved by fandom for his wit. 'The man with the heart of a small boy (he keeps it in a jar on his desk)' is still turning out excellent horror (and sometimes SF) stories, which Doubleday regularly put together in collections. Larson sets his teeth into Bloch's heart, from the early horror stories in *Weird Tales* and his Lovecraft-influenced Mythos stories to divisions into which his major novels can be placed: the psycho-horror novels, mystery and terror, SF views and historical horror novels, such as his latest book *The Night of the Ripper* and the recently re-issued *American Gothic*. The most interesting part of the book for *Dagon*-worshippers is of course the essay on Lovecraft's influence on Bloch's early work, the exchange of central characters in some of the Mythos stories, and Bloch's novel *Strange Eons*, all of which Larson titles "Shamblers, Shadows and Strange Eons". Good analysis, with lots of anecdotes (such as readers reactions to some of his first books; Bloch's ideas of films), and the customary primary & secondary bibliographies and index. Reviewed by Eddy C. Bertin.

ROBERT E. HOWARD

MARC A. CERASINI & CHARLES HOFFMAN. Published by Starmont House, Mercer Island, Washington, USA. 1987. 156pp. Cover by Steve Fabian. \$17.95 Hardcover; \$9.95 Trade Paperback. Starmont Reader's Guide No. 35.

Let's face it, there have been so many books written about Howard's life and works, that another book seems superfluous. After all, what more can be added to what is already known about his life, obsessive mother-love and suicide? The authors keep it short, their biography of Howard is selective but complete, and they prefer to delve deeper into the characters he created: Bran Mak Morn, Solomon Kane, King Kull, and of course, Conan, each of whom gets a long chapter, dealing in detail with backgrounds, story material, treatment, etc. Three shorter essays deal with his other fantasy works, his straight horror stories, and his other prose and poetry. Fans of Howard will find enough material to their taste; regrettably the section on Howard and Lovecraft seems just too short in a book in this series, and is only dealt with in the section "Horror Stories", which hasn't much new to add to what can be

found in other works on Howard. The book also includes both primary and secondary bibliographies and an index. *Reviewed by Eddy C. Bertin.*

DARK FEASTS - THE WORLD OF RAMSEY CAMPBELL

RAMSEY CAMPBELL. Published by Robinson Publishing, London. 1987. 352pp. Hardback £9.95; Trade Paperback £3.95.

This collection celebrates twenty five years of fiction from the mind of Britain's most loved author of horror fiction. the book comprises of thirty tales spanning the years and as such, the collection is a very mixed bunch of tales, some fair, some very good and many excellent but all of which are classics of Campbell's craft.

Amongst the tales are those three landmarks of Lovecraftian Mythos - "The Room in the Castle" (written in 1961), which showed signs of the promise to come; "Cold Print" which was the first Mythos tale to break away from the conventional Lovecraftian pastiche style utilised by so many of the poorer writers before it: and "The Voice of the Beach" Campbell's favourite Lovecraftian exercise which is pure Campbell and the closest the author has come to capturing the essence of Lovecraftian cosmic "awesomeness".

Also present are the brilliant "The Chimney" (winner of the World Fantasy Award, 1978), "In the Bag" (winner of the British Fantasy Award that same year), "Mackintosh Willy" (joint winner of the World Fantasy Award, 1980) and the highly praised "The Companion".

The tales develop a whole world of themes, imagery, language expression, and visions, that we have come to recognise as Campbell trademarks.

Campbell's infatuation with the 50's E.C. comics are documented by several tales, the best of which, "Call First" is included here. Campbell's autobiographical touches can be witnessed in the terrifying "The Chimney". "Just Waiting" (the product of a picnicking trip to Delamere Forest) and "Seeing the World" present a lighter side of the author as opposed to his usual bleak and pessimistic treatments, whilst "The Hands" and "Again" show that Campbell can present gross out and out horror when he wants to.

Campbell has been at his very best when writing subtle ghost stories three of which are collected here; "Out of Copyright", "Above the World" and "Mackintosh Willy". The latter also stands as a fine example of the author's use of describing his home-town, Liverpool, as something which can be made to appear both decadent, exciting and mysterious.

The book also includes a fine introduction in which Campbell tells of how his tales took shape. The editors have wisely saw fit to present the tales in chronological order which serves as a nice guide to tracing the development of Campbell's style and maturity as a writer. A very welcome collection, since many of the tales are now unobtainable and which have never been printed in hardback form before. If you are a Campbell completist you'll want the collection to save you searching through those piles of anthologies and miscellaneous magazines, every time you want your dosage of Ramsey. For new readers I recommend this collection as the best possible starting point to 'The World of Ramsey Campbell'. *Reviewed by Carl T. Ford.*

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 3 DREAM WARRIORS

Directed by Chuck Russell. Produced by Robert Shaye. Written by Wes Craven and Bruce Wagner. Starring Heather Langenkamp, Patricia Arquette, Priscilla Pointer, Larry Fishburne, Craig Wasson and Robert Englund.

The "Dream Warriors" are a group of teenagers who are inmates at the Western Psychiatric Hospital having all recently attempted suicide. A young girl named Kristen Parker is the latest inmate who, having recently suffered a series of terrifying nightmares, was found by her mother, having, apparently, tried to slash her own wrists. The institution staff are baffled by the recent rise of young suicides, until the staff is joined by Dr. Nancy Thompson, a specialist in dream disorders. Thompson realises that the kids are being menaced by a frightening figure in their dreams - the evil spirit of Freddy Kruegar, a child-murderer who was brutally burned to death by a vigilante mob several years ago. Kruegar is now taking revenge on the children of those that killed him - the last remaining kids of Elm Street. Nancy knows all this because she too, a few years before, suffered the same agonizing dreams.

A series of spectacular special effects-laden dreams wherein the kids are pursued by the evil monster provide the film its main entertainment value. A puppet hanging on the wall takes on the features of Freddie Kruegar and rises to turn its victim into a puppet too in a rather grisly scene. A guest appearance by Zsa Zsa Gabor on a television chat-show turns to terror as Freddie brutally murders all on the set. But my favourite scene is one where Freddie takes on the form of a huge snake-thing attempting to eagerly devour his intended victim.

Eventually the children of Elm Street realise that the only way to kill Freddie is to fight him in their dreams. Each child finds that he or she can develop their own special skills which come in useful when the evil Kruegar returns.

Heather Langenkamp reprises her role as Nancy Thompson from the first movie and acts fairly well. Craig Wasson of De Palma's *Body Double* also tries his best though the Nightmare movies haven't always been the best vehicles for characterisation. Also on hand is John Saxon as the alcoholic father of Nancy, having now hit the bottle, following the events of the first film.

All in all the film provides one and a half hours worthy entertainment. Whilst it is a definite improvement on the shoddy job made of *Elm Street 2*, it isn't as scary or as atmospheric as the original, directed by Craven. However, go catch the film for some fine animation sequences and beautiful lines from a raped Nun (Nan Martin) who informs us of the true origin of Freddy Kruegar. Good fun. *Reviewed by Carl T. Ford*

WEAWEWORLD

CLIVE BARKER. Published by Collins Publishers, London. 1987. 722pp. Hardback £10.95.

Barker tones down the bloodletting descriptions and splatter fare of his previous work in favour of a rather grand tale which can be described as both fantasy and science-fiction with a doage of horror thrown in for good measure. *Weaveworld* relates the tale of Calhoun Mooney and Suzanna Parrish whose lives take off upon a fantastic route into journey, mystery and mayhem when they become involved in the search for a magical carpet into which has been woven the remnants of a supernatural realm that was banished by its enemies almost a century before. Having glimpsed part of the magical promise that the carpet has to offer, Cal Mooney forsakes his boring life in Liverpool to retrieve the carpet when it falls into the hands of a sinister pair of travellers; Shadwell,

The Salesman who can offer a man his brightest dreams or darkest fantasies at a price and Immacolata, the Incantatrix, an evil sorceress who has the power to summon her hideous sisters "The Magdalene" and the "Hag" whose monstrous offspring give the heroes a nasty time upon their search.

Also on the path of the weave are a group of refugees from the Weave-world, known as the Seerkind. These oddities who resemble human form are trapped on Earth having become separated from the carpet, or Fugue as it is known, when a piece of weave was torn away accidentally during a struggle in a warehouse. The Seerkind are in pursuit of their homeland and team up with Cal and Suzanna, the granddaughter of the last remaining guardians of the Fugue who has inhabited her grandmother's magical powers of the Old Science known as the menstruum, a magical property which, gifted to certain women, can provide the recipient with visions of the future and the power to transform experience and mould it into the image of one's desire.

Pursuing both the Seerkind and the Fugue is a monstrosity known as the Scourge bent on destroying all that exists in the Weaveworld. Matters are further complicated by the introduction of a rather bent policeforce led by Inspector Hobart, who are called in to investigate when Liverpool inhabitants fall victim to the events brought about by the strangers.

Without doubt, *Weaveworld* represents Clive Barker's most ambitious project to date. The original plot-line seems destined to have a fair number of imitators during the next few years. Barker's characterisation is handled well with both the heroes and villains of the piece injecting charm from both sides.

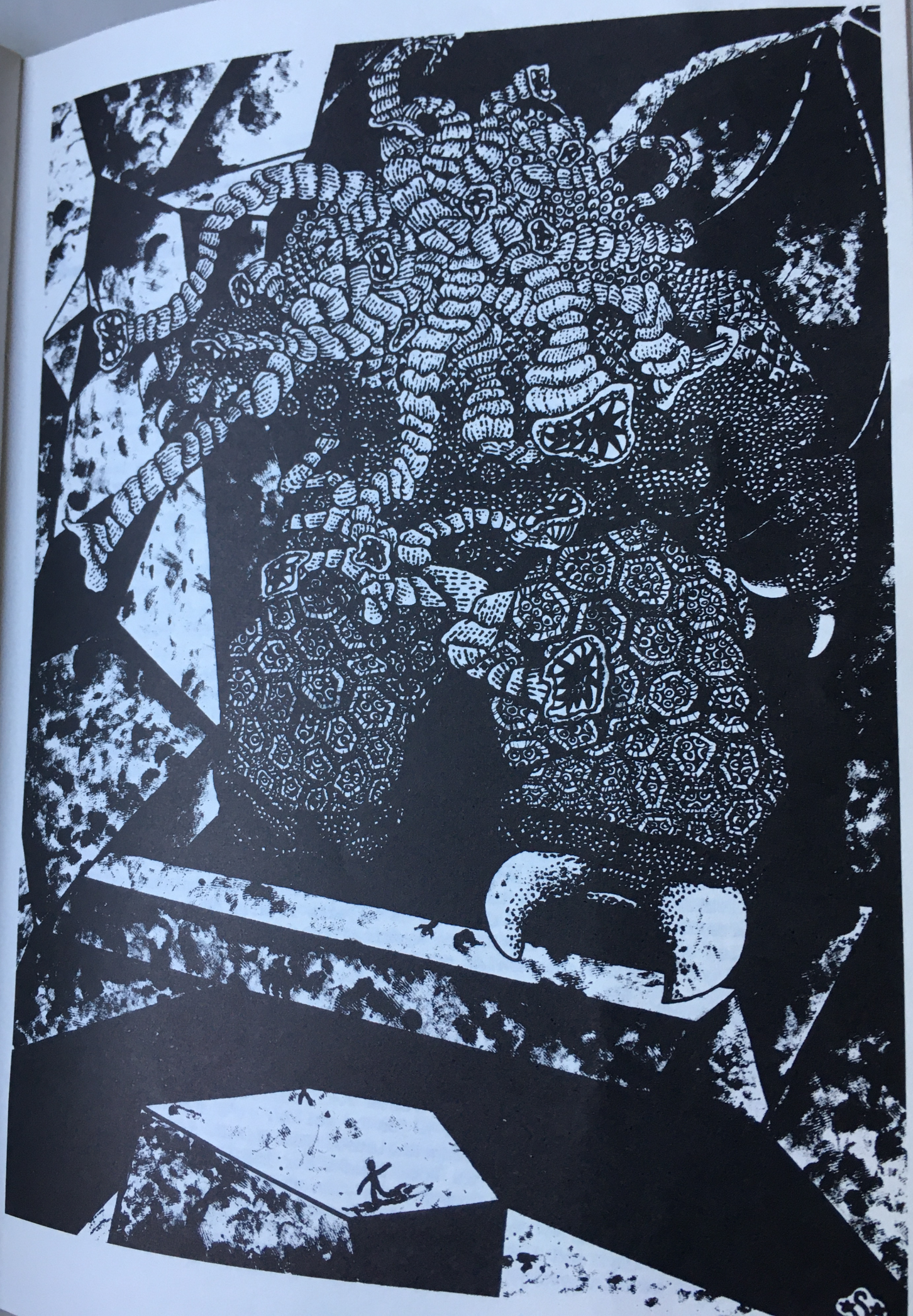
Advance rumours had spread amongst fandom saying that *Weaveworld* would mark an about-turn in Barker's use of gratuitous violence, heavy sexual imagery and gore, in an attempt to appeal to a wider audience. Regular Barker hounds will no doubt be pleased to learn that this simply isn't true. Whilst *Weaveworld* is, potentially, a more commercial project than the author's previous works, it remains an unrelenting no-holds barred, journey into the macabre. No doubt the major press will find fault in Barker's use of sex and violence here, but I still predict that Collins have a very big book on their hands.

The advertising hype preached in the *Weaveworld* flyers constantly quote the legendary Stephen King, who proclaims Clive Barker as being "the future of the horror genre". With the publication of this novel that future is already with us. Don't miss *Weaveworld*, an important milestone in the genre of weird fiction. *Review by Carl T. Ford.*

DEEP THINGS OUT OF DARKNESS

ROGER JOHNSON. *A Tales After Dark* Publication edited by Garrie Hall, 93 Beaumont Road, Loughborough, Leics LE11 2JA. 80pp. £3.50.

This collection of seven short tales by fandom author Roger Johnson is the latest project from Garrie Hall. As far as presentation is concerned the booklet is the best so far, unfortunately, the collection itself is a little disappointing. I must confess to finding Johnson's style rather stilted for my own tastes. Here he has three Mythos tales, two M. R. Jamesian ghost stories, a Conan-Doyle like piece concerning Jack the Ripper and a short one-pager entitled "Enigma" which I don't quite know what to make of. No doubt Mythos completists will find the Lovecraftian tales worth obtaining, but they are nothing special. *Review by Carl T. Ford.*



BLACK MAIL

Robert Bloch, Los Angeles, USA. I am extremely — and most favourably — impressed by both *Dagon* and Dave Carson's portfolio. Your article on the "Haunter" Trilogy ((*Dagon* #16)) was naturally of great interest to me: the more so, because it doesn't seem to have interested very many other HPL scholars/critics. You've really examined the stories in depth, and are one of the few who seems to realize the essentially humorous intents.

But there are lots of provocative and informative pieces in these issues — again, my gratitude, and best wishes always!

Sean Branney, The H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society, Colorado, USA. I must compliment you, as I feel that *Dagon* is the most superlative Lovecraft related journal which I am familiar with. The T.E.D. Klein issue was very interesting and I found the scenario which you enclosed to be enticing. I hope to throw it at some of my players in the next week or two. I have also found your artwork to be very appealing. I think you've done a great job in establishing your magazine; I hope that *Dagon* continues to grow and improve in the future.

Mike D. Mason, Loughborough. Issue 18/19 was excellent in its approach and study of Klein's work. The different articles and expose's were interesting and all had depth. The Robert Price piece "Lovecraft's Influence..." showed up the links that I'd missed when reading Klein's fiction. Although, some do seem a bit tenuous, when looked at closely. Again, I'm probably proved wrong when in the interview he does say that the stories in *Dark Gods* were written to be Lovecraftian in some respects.

Mark Valentine, Southampton. Many thanks for *Dagon* 18/19, a fascinating issue which I hope will bring T.E.D. Klein even more readers. It was particularly interesting to read about the author's own opinions of the supernatural — i.e. that although he rejects it all, he can't help retaining an emotional response to mystical ideas. This was the impression I got from *The Ceremonies* too.

Brian Lumley, Brixham, Devon. The trouble with writing LOCs to *Dagon* is that every time I have to start looking for superlatives! And after three or four issues people start to wonder: Is Ford *paying* these people to write these letters? Or could they possibly think that if not for the fact that *Dagon* does improve, *all* the time, and dramatically!

The case in hand is your double-issue T.E.D. Klein special, which I suspect you'll have one hell-of-a-job to follow. It's a beautiful issue and all concerned are to be congratulated. That T.E.D. deserves a thing like this is self-evident; his work speaks for itself. From the first time I read "The Events at Poroth Farm", in an American fanzine, I think it was, way back in — oh, 1973? — I knew I was going to see a lot more of T.E.D.'s work, and I guessed I was going to enjoy it. And so far he hasn't let me or anybody else down. His Mythos-styled tales are a force

to be reckoned with, and as a writer he'll go on to do well in just about any field he tries. I only hope and pray he sticks to his word (as spoken in your interview) and eventually gets out of the weird genre, so there'll still be room for me! A brilliant writer...

As for presentation of *Dagon*: go to the top of the class. Where artwork is concerned, well, there's not much to be faulted. But I feel I have to say something about Dave Carson. In many ways he's just like my appraisal of *Dagon*: he just goes from strength to strength. What with his artwork here, especially p.49, and his incredible drawings for *Mad Moon of Dreams*, and the new and totally excellent *Haunters of the Dark* portfolio, Carson is at the top of his field, and quite unique with it.

Stephen Newman, Holmfirth. I was greatly impressed with the standard of your magazine - although I must confess that I had never before heard of T.E.D. Klein, let alone read anything by him. Much of what Mr. Klein had to say about horror stories in general, and horror role playing games in particular, struck a chord with me. It is a fair comment, I feel, to maintain that characterisation in horror fiction is largely non-existent. Part of the reason for this is probably attributable to the length of the story in question - the number of good horror novelists can be counted on one hand (& I do not include HPL among them - to me only Stephen King & William Hope Hodgson (an unlikely duo) succeed in maintaining the level of tension beyond the length of a short story). Most good horror stories are short stories, and for appeal rely on "atmosphere" rather than characterisation. It is this atmosphere that is largely lost in reducing horror fantasy to statistics for the purposes of *Call of Cthulhu*. Of course, the intelligent Keeper can re-inject his own character into the game, but here again comes a problem - it will always be impossible to communicate perfectly the atmosphere of the world as visualised by the Keeper. To make up for this, a successful campaign must have events which, in turn, means the use of dice to some degree, leading itself to a further loss of atmosphere. The elements of "brooding" horror in HPL's work cannot, therefore, be fully communicated in a horror RPG - this, perhaps, is what 'turns off' Mr. Klein.

Mark Samuels, Sydenham, London. The interview was very interesting but a couple of debatable issues rear their heads. (i) The way in which the Mythos has become a game. Actually I now agree with Mr. Klein. I've tried running *Cthulhu* games that are serious & build up on atmosphere. Now this may just be personal experience but I've found role-players playing it completely the wrong way. I've never achieved half the awe, horror or whatever in running or playing in *Cthulhu* as I've had in reading Lovecraft's works. Most role-players don't appreciate HPL that much & I think the only way to get a reasonable game is probably only in the company of fellow HPL aficionados. (ii) Horror fans appear to read nothing outside of the genre. I am again forced to agree with Klein, myself being a lamentable example.

Andrew Whittaker, Liverpool. In the T.E.D. interview, Mr. Klein expressed scepticism about the value of a game based on Lovecraft's works, and I think that this is understandable considering that he is deeply involved in horror fiction though little involved with role playing games. The criticism of monsters, gods, etc. being reduced to a series of numbers and statistics is a valid one, I think. Part of the job of a Keeper is to put atmosphere back into these mechanics, putting the ghost back into the machine, you might say. All too often rules are regarded as the sup-

reme element in a game, but ideally they should be no more than guidelines to the action, and a Keeper should adjust and alter them whenever he feels it will suit the game. But with the criticism that reading and games-playing are too far apart, I think the wrong end of the stick has been grasped. The pleasure of reading a horror story is the pleasure of reading, seeing a vision of life transferred into print, coupled with the pleasure of the horror genre. The pleasure of playing a horror role-playing game is that same pleasure of the horror genre, but this time coupled with having your alter-egos act out their adventures and explore their world. The two are intrinsically different, and intentionally so. The one is not an attempt at the duplication of the other.

Robert Kemp, Bracknell, Berkshire. #18/19 was an excellent issue, entertaining and interesting. I particularly enjoyed the interview, and thought Mr. Klein raised some interesting points about his own fiction and that of others.

I feel that T.E.D. Klein's comments on role-playing games warrant some comment. I disagree strongly with the idea that reading is a "passive" activity. In my professional capacity as a lecturer in English literature I frequently encourage students to approach the reading of fiction as a game — to *actively* "play" with the text in the construction (and structure) of meanings. It is, after all, the reader who transforms the black marks on the paper into impressions, sensations and literal meanings. Without readers, any piece of writing is, quite literally, meaningless. This seems to me to be anything but a "passive" activity. The impulse to participate in the textual game (as "the Reader"; that rarely mentioned "character" who is implied and defined in all fictive texts) and the impulse to adopt the role of a character defined by game rules are surely essentially similar. One has simply exchanged the rules of fictive language for the less structured (but still essentially *linguistic*) rules of, say, *Call of Cthulhu*.

I could go on at length; the correspondence between the fictional experience of Lovecraft's unnamed narrators and the reader of the Lovecraftian story and the obvious similarities with the player/character piecing together the clues in a scenario could possibly supply me with enough material for an essay on the subject! But I've no desire to bore you with reams of esoteric literary theory, so I'll end my comments on the subject here.

Phew! I think we'll leave that debate there for now... Onto lighter matters...

Neil Grant, Mid. Glam., S. Wales. "The Events at Poroath Farm and the Literature of Horror", "Klein's God" and "Lovecraft's Influence on T.E.D. Klein" seemed interesting enough, but as I know little of Klein's work, they were rather wasted on me. "T.E.D. Klein's Images of Terror", by contrast was far more useful, particularly the section concerning his use of Tarot cards for which I have always had a fondness. "The Ceremonies and Themes from Arthur Machen" served as a useful introduction-cum-overview of Klein's plot without giving too much away.

Peter F. Jeffery, Leicester. Mark Valentine's article is both literate & interesting. I'm not sure, though, but he doesn't say more of Machen than Klein — but perhaps this is inevitable. I was particularly pleased to see attention being drawn to "A Fragment of Life" — a story which, I feel, is often overlooked, but which seems to me to be one of Machen's finest. No doubt Klein's view is more bleak than Machen's, as Mark concludes — possibly this is a sign of changing times — the 1980's are

rather bleak & it is, perhaps harder to look forward to the coming century with optimism than it was in the 1880's. A point which might have been worth considering is the difference in religious background of Machen and Klein, and possibly the implications of coming from rural Gwent to a great city as opposed to being actually raised in a bustling metropolis. No doubt, though, a full consideration of such matters was beyond Mark's brief for this article, and would have made it a little long for the purposes of *Dagon*.

David Lloyd Jones, Wrexham, Clwyd. After reading the latest issue I tried re-reading *Dark Gods* by Klein — I had bought it sometime before & had totally failed to get into it. Whilst I did finish it this time & to some extent found it enjoyable I can't really say that I find T.E.D. Klein to my liking — his style/story etc seems far too consciously based on Lovecraft's style & storyline which seems such a waste of talent — like setting out to create a perfect copy of the Mona Lisa instead of using your talents to give reign to your own imaginative powers.

However, that said, *Dagon* 18/19 was an enjoyable read & it did get me to actually read Klein & judge for myself.

Chris Turnock, Leigh, Greater Manchester. Congratulations on another fine issue, all the articles this month, were very illuminating. Especially interesting was Steven Mariconda's piece on the images in Klein's fiction.

On the gaming side of things Mark Morrison's article presented several good ideas and ways of capturing atmosphere. The "Landscapes" scenario illustrated his points perfectly.

Thomas Ligotti, Michigan, USA. This is the first time I've had the pleasure of reading your publication, and I'm extremely impressed by the pains you've taken in presenting all that one could possibly want in an issue or magazine devoted to a single author, right down to the most incidental illustration. I'm not familiar with fantasy games, but I read the scenario "Landscapes" with great interest, finding much to admire in the way a horror plot was reduced to its essentials and then reconstructed in tantalizing fragments. I would very much like to see a horror game that could be played by a single person, a plot of dreams; paranoia that might be integrated into someone's every day routine.

Richard Watts, Victoria, Australia. I must admit that my favourite part of *Dagon* is Morriscum's scenario — it just reads so well, and plays well too. I don't know how much to your readers liking it will be; I've noticed that quite a few of the scenarios in *Dagon* are rather laid back and restrained, which Mark's certainly isn't. "Bad craziness" is his term for it.

While all the other articles are of a very high standard indeed, I cannot help but feel a bit cool towards such mass scholarship; it all seems a little dry, a little impersonal. I'm sure you've heard it all before, but I read *Dagon* for gaming articles. If I wanted to read a scholarly treatise on say, "T.E.D. Klein's Use of Toilets in 'The Ceremonies' pp.167-169" I'd read it in *Crypt of Cthulhu*.

Despite all this, I *did* enjoy the issue, for the main reason that I enjoy T.E.D.'s stories.

Ah! So that's why they call him Bog Price.

Neil Grant. "Landscapes" was an excellent scenario, but I ran into one problem; once the investigators heard about the sewer people, they were

practically impossible to lure away from this false (?) trail and on to the rest of the scenario. The section at the farm was excellent; I became paranoid from the moment the border of scorched earth was mentioned, though I couldn't decide whether it was there to keep things in or out. Initially ((the players)) were taken unawares by the crops, and only just made it back to the house, but once they got the measure of the plants, they disposed of them in short order, though the gel-thing got away.

Steve Hatherley, Sidmouth. From the gamer's point of view it was left to Mark Morrison in "Keeping a la Klein" to reveal the merits of Klein's work. Or at least, the merits in running a Klein style game.

The scenario was of course brilliant. Not the easiest to run but I shall in all probability turn to it when I'm looking for ideas. I don't run a campaign, but if I did I'd find "Landscapes" an ideal filler for when the Keeper is feeling a little jaded.

Ian Mundell, Marlborough, Wiltshire. I enjoyed the Morrison article and scenario. I find this use of motifs or elements in a scenario intriguing rather than lifting chunks wholesale from an author's work. This practice leads to creative and original play, rather than derivative re-enactment, and enables the lifting of material from more diverse sources (examples of this I have come across are the use of the owl/man from Titus Groan by Mervyn Peake and the Lizard King imagery of Jim Morrison). Naturally the Keeping on these occasions will influence the success of the exchange. In my experience those images that are particularly strong within a Keeper are best brought out in a bushed scenario (i.e. no preparation, no previous planning). A sort of free-form creativity tends to occur, with the Keeper playing off of the investigators and adapting these lifted images into the framework of the game.

Mike D. Mason. Mark Morrison's small introduction to his scenario was thoughtful. Apart from conveying the difficulties of reproducing Klein's work into playable scenarios, he raised an interesting point. In the last paragraph he mentions giving the scenario writers a chance to 'express their intentions'. This sounds like good advice, perhaps not in every case, but in introducing larger scenarios that are obviously more complex, the chance would be appreciated. The Keeper would be able to realise what the writer is trying to achieve and it would also provide a chance for the writer to detail some of the situations that arose during playtesting.

T.E.D. Klein, New York, USA. Thank Mark Morrison for his good-natured tolerance of my anti-game grumblings. I found his plotting ingenious, and some of his images are so clever I'm tempted to steal them and claim them as my own. His analysis of my fiction from a Keeper's point of view seemed, to this novice, absolutely right on.

Andrew Whittaker. The feature that stood out beyond all others was Mark Morrison's scenario. Perhaps I'm looking at it through rose-tinted spectacles, as I have learnt from experience that scenarios that look wonderful on paper can come apart when played, but I think "Landscapes" is one of the best scenarios I have seen, in amateur or professional publications. Best of all, it goes a long way to breaking the mould of Cthulhu scenarios. The all too familiar format of hook-investigation-confrontation is taken apart and put back together again in a highly original way. Gone are the Spot Hidden rolls that reveal the secret

diary wherein the awful truth of xyz is revealed, gone are the cultist lairs in the basements of bad guy's houses, and gone are the routine and insipid investigations that dull many a scenario (and have become the equivalent of the 'dungeon adventure' in fantasy games).

I suppose the real strength of "Landscapes" is the way in which it injects a sense of mystery into the game. Even if the investigators are highly successful, they may still never know what really went on in that suburb and rural backwater. All too often players realise that they are up against, say, Deep Ones, and they launch into the familiar minor monster-bashing routine, which is boring for all concerned. Here the foe is something they do not (and will not) understand, making the situation all the more frightening.

A mixed reaction met Peter F. Jeffery's article.

Ian Mundell. I felt the "Klein to the Rescue" piece was a little misfired, like telling someone else's joke. Perhaps it would have been better to have reprinted the relevant article along with the commentary.

Mark Morrison, Victoria, Australia. I've not got stuck into the articles yet, but I've skimmed Peter's, and was a little disappointed; I thought it would be a bit of history and discussion of Klein's Lovecraftiana, not just a discussion on one obscure point of argument. It does what it sets out to do, and well, but I thought it would be a bit broader; but it's hard to criticise someone for something they didn't write, rather than what they did. I'll take it up with Pete.

Neil Grant. "Klein to the Rescue" was an interesting example of a piece of scholarly detective work, albeit in relation to a fairly minor problem.

Peter F. Jeffery. Turning to my own effort — modest though it is, it is fitting that someone should have turned the attention away from horror and onto the subject of scholarship. Scholarship is something I love in itself — a nicely turned argument is a lovable thing. My piece seems an inadequate tribute. The *United Amateur* writings, obviously should be 1915-1925 not 1815-1925, but the misprint is unlikely to confuse anyone. "Sort" in the subtitle should, of course, be "sorts", so that the subject agrees in number with the verb.

I received a rather poor feedback as regards the Klein fiction, here are a few of the corpses that dared to scream...

Mark Samuels. "Well-Connected" isn't a bad story but it isn't comparable with the tales from *Dark Gods*, actually it's something of a let-down after reading those haunting masterpieces.

Neil Grant. "Well-Connected" was the first T.E.D. Klein story I've read, and I felt it was fairly good, though the last paragraph might fairly be described as odd, even somewhat unsatisfactory.

Mike D. Mason. "Well-Connected" was an enjoyable read, if anyone can actually call Klein's stories "enjoyable"! I was expecting a bit of an 'unhappy' ending — i.e. the girl getting the chop, but I was surprised at the ending being similar to the old 'heroics' type story. That's not to say it demeaned the ending or story; because I did like it. Where does Mr. Klein get his ideas from? — Bar stools covered in "the testacles of a sperm whale".!! Yuck.

And that my slobbering shoggoths, is your lot.

Contributing Corpses

Andy Bennison, Eddy C. Bertin,
Carl T. Ford, N. Mark Gordon,
Peter F. Jeffery, Des Lewis,
Thomas Ligotti, Gary Lovisi and
Sandy Petersen - *writhing writers*.

Dave Carson, N. Mark Gordon,
Martin McKenna and Sylvia
Starshine - *insane illustrators*.

Carl T. Ford - editor.

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Dagon #21 will be available
in March and will include
"In the Shadow of Another
World" by Thomas Ligotti,
The final tales of Murkales
by Des Lewis, Peter Jeffery
and Stacy Clarke will begin
their long awaited essay on
eldritch tomes and Mark
Morrison will return with
his overdue essay on the
Cthulhu worlds of scenario
writer Keith Herber. Plus
all the regular news, grue
and R'lyeh Reviews and an
interview with Britain's
newest prince of darkness;
author of the award winning
Books of Blood, and movie
macabre master Clive Barker.

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